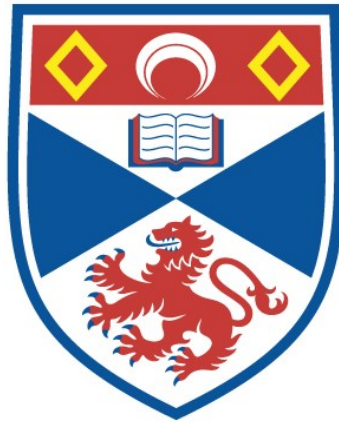


# THE POETRY OF GUILLEVIC

Gavin Bowd

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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THE POETRY OF GUILLEVIC

by

Gavin Bowd

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the University of St. Andrews  
March 1991



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## The Poetry of Guillevic

Combining formal and thematic analysis with exposition of biographical and historical background, this dissertation examines the development of the poetry of Guillevic. After an introduction which considers previous critical approaches, three main questions are explored: the relationship between the individual and the collective; the role of poetry; and the relationship between man and nature.

Section One is devoted to Guillevic's early poems, which emphasise a sense of exclusion from society and of antagonism between man and nature. With the Resistance experience, however, this world-view changes in the direction of humanist commitment.

Section Two deals with Guillevic's commitment as poet to the French Communist Party. Man assumes command over nature; time progresses inexorably towards utopia; and the poet serves the political vanguard, this culminating in Guillevic's adoption of regular verse.

Section Three describes Guillevic's poetry in the wake of the unmasking of Stalin in 1956. On the one hand, there is the entry of disorder into Guillevic's world and an uneasy relationship with society. On the other hand, there is an emphasis on harmony between man and nature. Poetry is freed from institutional commands and performs the role of attaining holiness without God.

In the conclusion, Guillevic is compared and contrasted with his contemporaries. Two common features are found: interest in the presence of things in the world; and the reinvention of the sacred in the wake of the "death of God".

I, Gavin Bowd, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No.12 in October 1988 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in April 1989; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St.Andrews between October 1988 and March 1991.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St.Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is on the life and work of Eugène Guillevic. To begin, I will investigate the life of his work, exploring the ways in which critics have interpreted it. In this introduction, I will identify the strengths and weaknesses of different critical works. In the course of this exploration, I will put forward what I believe to be a deeper critical approach and fuller account of the development of Guillevic.

### 1) *Daix and Tortel*

Two critical studies of Guillevic have been published by Seghers for its *Poètes d'aujourd'hui* series, by Pierre Daix (published in 1954) and Jean Tortel (published in 1963). These two studies put forward strongly contrasting views of the poet's development. Between them, they represent the essence of most critical comment on Guillevic up to the 1970s. I will outline each account, then critically consider them, with the aim of finding a better approach to his work.

#### a) Pierre Daix

Writing in 1954, Pierre Daix, at that time a young Stalinist intellectual, celebrates Guillevic's adherence to the vanguard of the revolution and his discovery of the "monde réel". For Daix, Guillevic's development as a poet is "le chemin du silence au chant, de l'appréhension du monde à sa compréhension, de la soumission à la maîtrise" (PD, 10).

For Daix, Guillevic's early poems, published in *Requiem* and *Terraqué*, showed fear and ignorance of the outside world:

En ce temps-là, c'était avec une sorte de crainte, la peur de ne pas voir les points de repère, un peu l'horreur du vide et l'appréhension de l'éternité. (PD, 22)

Guillevic personified the non-human, making his environment hostile and mysterious. Themes of anguish, escape and universal soul showed the pernicious influence of German romanticism and drew dangerously close to the "Hitlerian" existentialism of Martin Heidegger. The result of this was praise by petty-bourgeois and Fascist critics. It was Guillevic's fear and ignorance of the real world which pleased them:

(...)le poème comme un voile à peine levé sur le mystère, et plus le voile était levé timidement, plus toute la critique s'en satisfaisait. (PD, 49)

This changes with the experience of the Resistance. Guillevic joins other poets in abandoning idealist "projections" onto the world and choosing to "reflect" the real in a materialist fashion:

Des poètes venaient de casser les mirages idéalistes de la poésie créatrice du monde où par un affreux jeu de mots sur l'étymologie (sic) du mot poète, une bourgeoisie décadente les avait aiguillés. Ils apprenaient sous le grand choc de la guerre que la poésie ne se substitue pas au réel, mais qu'elle a à le dire, à le refléter. (PD, 58)

Instead of the poets being the avant-garde seeking out new sensations and ways of seeing, they become subordinate to the avant-garde of revolution, in contact with the objective laws of history. With the committed poem "Le Premier jour", Guillevic the poet and Guillevic the citizen are reconciled: "Guillevic a rattrapé l'avant-garde de l'armée en marche" (PD, 20).



With the poet's adherence to the Communist vanguard, things cease to be mysterious presences, but become objects serving the human pursuit of happiness:

Aujourd'hui, chez Guillevic, les hommes sont devenus la mesure de l'homme et la nature, un moyen de vérifier cette mesure, un objet de travail, que les hommes peuvent transformer, maîtriser, diriger pour leur bonheur (PD, 22)

In Guillevic's poetry there is "l'unique affirmation du pouvoir illimité des hommes" (PD, 89) and "la fin d'un dialogue avec les choses de la nature" (PD, 89).

This discovery of the "monde réel" makes Guillevic's language begin to say directly the way things are. However, there emerges a conflict, according to Daix, between the "realist" content and "decadent" form:

Cette poésie qui suit son temps et se veut capable d'exprimer le réel, le plus possible et l'essentiel du réel, se définit en même temps par un certain nombre de critères (...) strictement formels, et par une notion du poème, le poème-objet, qui est du domaine de l'art pour l'art. (PD, 98-99)

This conflict between form and content is resolved by Guillevic's adoption, in 1954, of sonnet form. The adoption of regular verse and phonetic patterning, plus references to precise places and events, expresses both socialism and the affirmation of national identity. With this "adéquation du contenu à cette forme" (PD, 114), there is an "épanouissement (...) du lyrisme" (PD, 114). Daix concludes enthusiastically: "la démarche de Guillevic est assurée de demeurer dans l'histoire de notre poésie" (PD, 109).

#### b) Jean Tortel

Tortel, writing in 1963, in the wake of the unmasking of Stalinism by Krushchev, reacts explicitly against the thesis

of Pierre Daix, affirming the autonomy of poetry and rejecting its adulteration by ideology.

Tortel does not judge poetry on the grounds of its adherence to the Party, but rather valorises its uniqueness and independence:

(...) toute poésie est avant tout un certain être dont la gloire est d'être soi, de même qu'un homme revendique d'être une personne. Un langage qui parvient à obtenir l'irréductibilité, s'immobilisant (...) ainsi en une espèce d'éternisation, atteint par l'éternité de sa morale. (JT, 40-41)

Poetry is "une chose réelle, une existence structurée en forme de verbe, qui occupe son propre espace et qui obéit à ses propres lois" (JT, 42).

Because poetry is naturally autonomous, it is adulterated by what Tortel calls "ideology". It has an adverse effect because "l'idéologie n'a nul besoin de l'autonomie poétique" (JT, 41). The committed Marxist's effect on poetry is essentially *reductive*:

Son recours sera de limiter la part de la présence, de la réduire au rôle d'un outil manié par la connaissance rationnelle, d'en faire, en fait, la servante d'une activité plus haute, et de l'englober ainsi dans le seul mouvement réel par lequel l'esprit agit sur le monde objectif, qui est la construction de l'univers socialiste. (JT, 45)

When, after the war, Guillevic begins to write verse committed to the Communist Party, it ceases to be "poetic":

(...) l'être autonome qu'il était devenu tend à redescendre la pente qui le ramène au discours; il redevient graphisme pur, signe ou schéma d'une pensée extérieure à lui. (JT, 55)

For Tortel, Guillevic was aware of this even in the middle of his committed phase. The elegaic tone of *Terre à bonheur* showed regrets for a beauty now lost.

Guillevic's abandonment of committed writing, after the unmasking of Stalinism, revives Tortel's notion of the

poetic. His post-Stalin poetry is "la présence renouvelée d'une autonomie absolue, où la voix du poète ne ressemble à aucun autre, ne dépend d'aucun autre" (JT, 38). In "Chemin", Guillevic recounts, according to Tortel, the recovery of a lost land, a landscape peopled with the familiar features of Guillevic's imagination, the whole poem marked by themes of innocence and eroticism. In *Carnac*, Guillevic expresses a "sagesse sereine", knowing that "un esprit ne peut équilibrer l'univers" (JT, 79). After a turbulent period, Guillevic gives us an example of poetry's "reprise de conscience d'une condition plus modeste" (JT, 82).

But Tortel does not simply concentrate on the problem of commitment in poetry. His study also places emphasis on Guillevic's Breton background. Guillevic is influenced by the archaic and elemental. Morbihan is "composé de trois éléments, l'air, la terre, et l'eau" (JT, 16); it is a "pays enfermé en lui-même, dans ses traditions, ses rites, son langage" (JT, 17). Guillevic is "l'homme du pays des Druides, où la lande et les rocs, <<faces de juges>>, théâtre de rites, de sacrifices" (JT, 19). For Tortel, Guillevic embodies contradictions: he is "à la fois (...) rationaliste et religieux, primitif et militant" (JT, 13).

### c) Critique

The studies of both Daix and Tortel provide insights into the development of Guillevic. Both, however, have weaknesses, linked to their views on the nature of poetry.

Pierre Daix writes about Guillevic from the same political vantage-point as the poet, and for that reason

correctly describes the development of Guillevic at that stage. Between the early poems and Guillevic's period of committed Communist writing there is a change from social isolation to happy identification with the collective, and from man's inferiority to things to the celebration of human power over nature. Daix is also correct to point out the ideological significance of form: regular verse is adopted by Guillevic and other poets during the 1950s in order to assert a national identity. This particular movement in poetry, known as *Poésie nationale*, will be described in Section Two.

Tortel, writing in the aftermath of Stalinism, correctly emphasises the abandonment of committed writing by Guillevic: the former's arguments on the pernicious influence of ideology on poetry are taken up by the latter in interviews from the 1960s onwards. Tortel is right to point to a move towards "humility" in Guillevic's poetry: the later Guillevic loses faith in the dream of utopia and ceases to celebrate the power exerted by man over the non-human. Tortel also points out the tension between the primitive and the modern in Guillevic: the tension between the archaic, elemental Brittany of his childhood and the urban, capitalist milieu of his adulthood is never resolved.

Both studies should be criticised, however. Daix's study is obviously overtaken by events: the later Guillevic rejects the socialist realist view of poetry and the notion of humanity's "mastery" of the earth.

More deeply, Daix's notion of language "reflecting" reality cannot be accepted. In order to examine this idea, it is worthwhile referring to the poem "Le Premier jour"

which he celebrates as Guillevic's arrival in the real world.

# LE PREMIER JOUR

Il sera beau,  
L'arbre que trouvera la lumière au matin,  
Le premier jour.

Quand l'étouffoir sera tombé,  
Quand les maîtres seront jetés,  
Quand le peuple se verra seul dans la lumière  
Avec lui-même.

Elle sera belle,  
Cette occasion pour la lumière  
De prendre un arbre, le matin  
Du premier jour.

Quand le peuple atteindra ses rues,  
Quand le peuple fera ses joies,  
Et verra l'arbre se tenir dans la lumière. (G, 188)

Several features of this poem are worth noting: the division between good and evil, metaphorically expressed by light/dark; the future tense repeated throughout the poem; and the octosyllabic lines redolent of popular song tradition. What is important to note here is the poet's reliance on convention. The clear structure of confrontation and the future tense are reproducing the eschatological dream of a final struggle between good and evil, leading to the end of history. Prosody itself is a rallying-point: the song form identifies the poem with a popular, socialist tradition. The poem should be seen not simply in the context of non-linguistic events that, in Daix's view, it "reflects", but also in the context of genres and myths that it draws upon. When Daix champions one poem as "realist" over another which is "decadent", he means that the poem accords with his world-view. In the context of genres and myths, a poem like "Le Premier jour" has an ideological significance that the critic approves of. Another example of

Daix's unsatisfactory view of poetry is his praise for Guillevic's adoption of regular verse. Daix valorises the sonnet form and the use of phonetic patterning, but cannot explain why this more adequately represents non-linguistic reality than free verse. What Daix is really saying is that the sonnet form signifies tradition rather than modernism, and for that reason French identity rather than individual innovation.

Daix is therefore wrong to assert that there is an unmediated relationship between the language of the poem and non-linguistic reality. Certainly, many of Guillevic's poems refer to specific historical events, and should therefore be seen in that context. But the language of the poems also shows an attitude to tradition which is part of his Communist world-view at that time. A better critical approach would look not simply at how the poems refer to politics, but also at how the style of the poems express a world-view. The development of the overall structure of the poems would show Guillevic's differing views of the nature of history. Attention to language register and prosody would show Guillevic's changing relationship with tradition.

The thesis of Jean Tortel cannot be accepted because, to begin with, serenity is not so easily or rapidly gained in Guillevic's work as he suggests. In *Carnac*, there is not serenity but anguish at the breakdown of order. This troubled perspective is developed in *Ville* and *Paroi*. It is only in *Inclus*, with its celebration of poetry, that troubles disappear. But this serenity is only momentary: the crisis of man's relationship to nature is an important theme in Guillevic's later work.

Despite valorising the "irreducible" nature of poetry, Tortel does reduce Guillevic's poetry by leaving out the complexities of his itinerary. He also reduces it by insisting on the "autonomy" of the poem and thus leaving out exploration of Guillevic's affinities with ideological currents, contemporary poets and linguistic conventions.

Both Daix and Tortel bring something to the study of Guillevic's poetry. Daix correctly identifies the man/nature and form/ideology problems. Tortel points out humility, the failure of commitment, and the primitive/modern tension. A more complete account will bring together these studies and consistently follow through these themes. It will also attend to form, an aspect largely neglected by both writers.

## 2) Jean Pierrot and Other Critics

Pierre Daix's account ends in 1954; re-editions of Tortel's study bring it up to the 1970s, but it essentially defines itself in opposition to Daix. Jean Pierrot's book, *Guillevic ou la sérénité gagnée*, is the study that gives widest coverage of the poet's work, from *Requiem* to *Trouées*.

In his study, Pierrot outlines the "deep imaginary structure" of Guillevic and describes the poet's attainment of serenity at the end of his itinerary. An exposition and discussion of Pierrot's work will provide the opportunity to comment on other critics who have taken similar approaches.

*Guillevic ou la sérénité gagnée* begins with an exposition of the "deep imaginary structure" of Guillevic. Pierrot identifies a specific attitude to space and time, and a hierarchy of elements—earth, water, wind, fire—that

confirms, he believes, the value of the poetics of Gaston Bachelard. Concentrating mainly on *Terraqué* and *Exécutoire*, he describes the "tragédie quotidienne" in Guillevic's poetry, a world riven by fear and chaos.

(The Bachelard-inspired approach is extended by Françoise Craipain in her doctoral thesis, "Guillevic, Eugène: Le minéral, le végétal et l'homme dans l'univers poétique de l'écrivain". Craipain examines the poet's mineral world including earth, water and sky, the vegetal world, including roots, trees and flowers, and aspects of human life, including cities and woman. Craipain shows how Guillevic evaluates different elements: the cloud, for instance, is "invertebrate" and thus is accorded a negative value, whereas the root, which provides *pesanteur*, is championed by the poet.)

The study by Pierrot moves to a diachronic level. Pierrot describes what he sees as the precarious and unsuccessful attempt to escape the "tragédie quotidienne" in political commitment. From *Carnac* onwards there is a successful attempt by the poet to free himself from anguish and possess the world: in *Carnac*, he enters into dialogue with the sea; in *Sphère* and *Euclidiennes* he organises space, and in *Ville* he comes to terms with the urban universe and the "modern human adventure". The result is a poet who can accept the world. For Pierrot, the story of Guillevic is one of cure from illness:

Entrer en poésie, permettre aux tendances profondes du moi de s'exprimer à travers cette liberté à la fois totale et gouvernée qu'est l'écriture poétique, c'est en un sens, mieux peut-être qu'entrer en psychanalyse, trouver le chemin de la réconciliation. (JP, 6-7)



Pierrot's serenity thesis meets with the agreement of most Guillevic critics. For Monique Benoît (1), Guillevic moves from an attitude of "contre" to "avec": with the appearance of death, the poet accepts temporal limits and frontiers of investigation. For Alain Bosquet (2), the author's attitude to the external world develops from guilt to triumphalism to a new humility. For Roger Munier (3), Guillevic investigates things which appear self-sufficient, this investigation ending with an acceptance of their otherness. However, the serenity thesis is not universally accepted: according to Marcel Cohen (4), *Du Domaine*, published in 1977, expresses fatigue and vain hope.

Both the phenomenological approach practised by Pierrot and Craipain and the serenity thesis expounded by Pierrot and other critics, are unsatisfactory.

The image-criticism practised by Pierrot and Craipain is limited because it places emphasis on synchrony. The "deep imaginary structure" of the poet is assumed to be unchanging. This leaves out the study of the *evolution* of Guillevic's attitude towards elements of his universe. Guillevic's evaluation of nature changes significantly when he, briefly, defends and illustrates Stalinist politics.

Pierrot and Craipain's approach is also limited because Guillevic's poetry cannot be reduced to its images. The poem is a work of language, and because of that its structure is more elaborate. The poet's world-view is also expressed by *modality*, the degree of assurance or commitment with which a speaker vouches for a proposition; by *deixis*, or the orientation of the content of a sentence in relation to time, place and personal participants; and by textual

structure, *cohesion* and *progression* showing an attitude towards the nature of the unfolding of events. *Language register* and *genre* express an attitude towards literary tradition. In addition, Pierrot and Craipain omit almost any reference to Guillevic's use of prosody in order to convey meaning.

The serenity thesis is only partially convincing. It is true that the extreme melancholy found in Guillevic's early poems disappears for long periods of his later work. In addition to this, the disappointment of Communist hopes is partially overcome by the justification of life found in, among other things, love and poetry. But it would be wrong to say that Guillevic no longer has a troubled perspective. In his later work, the poet is painfully aware of the failure of political solutions, remains unsatisfied by modern, urban society, and is disturbed by the threat of ecological catastrophe. Far from disappearing, the extreme melancholy of the early poems returns with force from the late 1970s onwards.

### *Conclusion*

In this thesis, I will attempt to give a fuller account of Guillevic's life and work than those permitted by the approaches outlined above. The account will be fuller not simply because it will be more alive to the complexities of the poet's itinerary and make up for the weaknesses in other critical works. It will be *broader*: it will cover Guillevic's poetry from his first collection, *Requiem*, published in 1938, to his most recent work, *Le Chant*,

published in 1990. The account will also place emphasis on the episode of *Poésie nationale* in the mid-1950s, which is treated only briefly, and in partisan fashion, by Daix, Tortel and other critics, and is overlooked by David Caute in his work, *Communism and the French Intellectuals*. A more detailed account of this ill-fated movement in poetry to which Guillevic contributed would help both Guillevic studies and the history of the cultural policy of the French Communist Party.

This study will attend to both form and content. It will explore how Guillevic's attitudes towards, for example, nature, politics, poetry and the sacred evolve throughout his work. The study of the poet's world-view will be deepened by attention to language structures, for instance, modality, deixis, register and prosody. I will examine the overall structure of the poems, looking at cohesion and progression to show the different ways in which detail unfolds.

I will divide Guillevic's poetry into three periods. Section One will be devoted to his early poems, which show a pessimistic world-view which changes in the direction of humanist commitment. Section Two will deal with the period during which Guillevic devotes himself to the Communist solution, writing committed poetry. In Section Three, I shall examine how, in the wake of the failure of Communism, Guillevic sets out on a restless and unending search for unity with man and nature. In these sections, I attend to the general form and content of the works in that period, but also have explications of particular poems that demonstrate stages in his development. They will not simply

be descriptive: in Section One and Section Two, the explications will investigate the problem of political commitment and literary worth. The explications in Section Three will show themes of that period--homelessness and the saving power of woman--and the way in which form changes in the wake of Guillevic's abandonment of literary commitment.

In the course of this thesis, I will refer to writers who, I believe, help comprehension of Guillevic's poetry. In Section Two, for instance, I refer briefly to Kenneth Burke, whose comments on rhetoric are helpful when attempting to identify the links between Guillevic's committed poetry and political discourse. In Section Three, I refer to Jean-François Lyotard, whose notion of "postmodernity" in the wake of the collapse of "grand narratives" is suggestive when applied to the description of the formal upheavals in Guillevic's poetry in the wake of Stalin. In that Section, I also refer frequently to Mircea Eliade's work, *Le Sacré et le profane*, whose world/chaos distinction and description of sacred space and time I have found useful concepts in the explanation of important themes and images in that period of Guillevic's work.

In this study of Guillevic's poetry, we come into contact with major problems of the twentieth century: Communism and individual freedom, man's relationship with nature, the reinvention of the sacred in the wake of the death of God. Guillevic is an individual involved in history: there are events and movements in thought he consciously reacts to and others to which the reader can relate him. For this reason, each section of the thesis will have a chapter entitled "Biography", outlining his personal itinerary, and one

entitled "History", outlining the events and trends in thought to which each period of his work is most usefully related. In the Conclusion, I will compare and contrast Guillevic with contemporary poets. This will identify affinities between Guillevic's work and literary trends, and bring into focus the particular concerns and style of his poetry.

The result of the approach outlined in this Introduction will be attention to the particularity of Guillevic's itinerary, alive to its formal and thematic complexities, but also attention to its historical significance, producing a story that both introduces to the reader an excellent poet and helps us think about the times we live in.

#### *References*

- 1) Monique Benoît, "Guillevic: une géométrie obsessionnelle", *Etudes littéraires*, 5 (1972), 291-308
- 2) Alain Bosquet, "Guillevic ou la conscience de l'objet", *Nouvelle revue française*, 131 (nov. 1963), 876-882
- 3) Roger Munier, "Le pouvoir des mots", *Nouvelle revue française*, 293 (mai 1977), 85-88
- 4) Marcel Cohen, "Guillevic: du domaine", *Nouvelle revue française*, 309 (oct. 1978), 89-92

## ABBREVIATIONS

## Works by Guillevic

A	<i>Avec</i>
AM	<i>L'Age mûr</i>
AP	<i>Art poétique</i>
C	<i>Carnac</i> (coll.Poésie edition)
Ch	<i>Le Chant</i>
Cr	<i>Creusement</i>
D	<i>Du Domaine</i> (coll.Poésie edition)
E	<i>Etier</i>
En	<i>Encoches</i>
EV	<i>Envie de vivre</i>
EX	<i>Exécutoire</i> (coll.Poésie edition)
G	<i>Gagner</i> (original edition)
G 2	<i>Gagner</i> (revised edition)
I	<i>Inclus</i>
M	<i>Motifs</i>
P	<i>Paroi</i>
R	<i>Requis</i>
S	<i>Sphère</i> (coll.Poésie edition)
T	<i>Terraqué</i> (coll.Poésie edition)
TB	<i>Terre à bonheur</i> (original edition)
TB 2	<i>Terre à bonheur</i> (revised edition)
Tr	<i>Trouées</i>
TS	<i>Trente et un sonnets</i>
V	<i>Ville</i>
VP	<i>Vivre en poésie</i>

## Critical works

PD	Pierre Daix, <i>Guillevic</i>
JT	Jean Tortel, <i>Guillevic</i>
JP	Jean Pierrot, <i>Guillevic ou la sérénité gagnée</i>

NB: All references will be listed at the end of each chapter.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SECTION ONE--EARLY POEMS



### 1.1) BIOGRAPHY 1907-1945

In this chapter, I will outline the formative influences of Guillevic's upbringing, which cause difficult relationships with class, region, family and religion. I will then describe important features of his adulthood: his move towards politics and his literary development.

Eugène Guillevic was born in Carnac, on the 5th August 1907, into a family of poor peasants and artisans. His grandfather, on his father's side, was the village tailor, while his mother, also from a family in the region, worked as a seamstress. His father, who had begun his working life as a sailor, joined the gendarmerie soon after the birth of his son.

The status of the father as a policeman caused difficult relationships with class and regional identity. Soon leaving Carnac for Jeumont, an industrial town in the Nord department, Guillevic, although very poor, was isolated from the working class, then in violent dispute:

Je me souviens bien de l'atmosphère de Jeumont (...) des grèves, des manifestations, des cris "Nous voulons le beurre à neuf sous", du climat de violence que ça créait, de l'angoisse de ma mère, car des gendarmes étaient souvent tués. (VP, 13-14)

Moving back to Saint-Jean-Brévelay in Brittany, Guillevic experienced another exclusion. Of Breton background, he nevertheless was isolated because the work of his father required that he be sent to a lay primary school, where only French was spoken. When his family moved again, in 1919, to Ferrette, in Alsace, Guillevic met another linguistic barrier, that of the Alsatian dialect.

If Guillevic's relationship with region and class was unusual, within his family there was isolation and conflict. His mother, Guillevic tells us, was cold and severe:

Mon premier souvenir est (...) un souvenir de culpabilité, dans une gendarmerie, sous une mère tyrannique. (VP, 14)

At the same time, his father was distant and indifferent, not simply towards his wife, but towards the youngster himself.

One solution to this family situation was flight among the elements and the games and rites of the gang:

Les jeudis, nous allions à longueur de journée dans les champs: une communion profonde avec la terre, avec l'herbe, avec les genêts, avec la lande. (VP, 19)

Other solutions were writing and an intense religious devotion which lasted into the 1930s.

The nature of the religious influence on Guillevic was ambivalent. From his mother he inherited a Catholicism whose dominant category was guilt:

J'étais la manifestation même du péché. J'ai vécu le jugement dernier pendant toute mon enfance. Rien de ce que je pouvais faire n'était innocent. Si je ramassais un caillou, c'était contre qui? (...) Au nom de la religion, ma mère m'avait inculqué la peur. Je me disais: si je manque de respect à ma mère, je vais être puni, (...) Dieu va la venger. (VP, 71-72)

However, on the positive side, religion offered what Guillevic calls *présence*. In religious devotion he saw a collective *élan* that he would later call *la fête*:

J'ai fait le pèlerinage de Sainte-Anne-d'Auray et j'ai monté un escalier, avec trente marches peut-être, à genoux. Je n'y comprenais rien. La foule chantait "Ave, ave Maria". C'était très impressionnant (...) Je me souviens aussi du pardon de Josselin (...) Ces pardons bretons avait quelque chose d'incantatoire et de païen. Il y avait incontestablement communion, élan collectif. J'ai souvent parlé de la fête dans mes poèmes, le souvenir de ces pardons y est pour quelque chose. (VP, 56-58)

The Breton inflection of Christianity was very important. Faith combined with acute awareness of the natural elements to produce what Guillevic sees as the pantheistic nature of Breton piety:

(...) les Bretons sont beaucoup plus animistes ou panthéistes que chrétiens. Ils ne sont pas idéalistes, plutôt monistes, ils séparent mal la matière de l'esprit. La foi des Bretons est beaucoup plus païenne. (VP, 35)

This sense of the sacred manifesting itself in the world of things extended beyond Celtic civilisation to prehistory. It was among the menhirs of Carnac that Guillevic had intimations of a total holiness:

Etre né au pays des menhirs--du monde mégalithique--, ces menhirs qui appartiennent à une civilisation dont on ignore tout et qui date de longtemps avant les Celtes. On est en plein inconnu, en pleine mystère. On est dans le sacré. (VP, 52)

This sense of being included in a vaster holiness, of being *avec*, as Guillevic calls it, did not extend to experiencing fraternity with fellow human beings. He was denied any tenderness until love affairs as a young man, while the camaraderie of national service displeased him. Nevertheless, in the 1930s, his social orientation began to change towards involvement in politics. The rise of fascism and the struggle against it in the *Front populaire* and the Spanish civil war, were the source of political concern:

Lorsque j'étais soldat, à vingt ans, on ne sentait pas le monde encore tellement en danger, si proche de la guerre, mais à partir de 1933 cela est devenu sérieux et même très grave: la guerre d'Abyssinie, la guerre d'Espagne, la montée de Hitler, des fascismes, on ne pouvait pas ne pas s'angoisser. (VP, 125-126)

His experience of work as a civil servant pushed him in a progressive political direction. Guillevic passed the entrance examination for the *Enregistrement* in 1926. His career was at first provincial: at Huningue, near Bâle, then

in Mulhouse, Rocroi and Charleville. In 1935, he was posted to Paris, where he rose up the various levels of the administrative career structure until he became *inspecteur de l'économie nationale*. This experience gave Guillevic knowledge of both the judicial system and the economy, which in turn made him aware of the working class and the nature of big business, this pushing him towards Marxism.

This change in social orientation coincided with the abandonment of formal religion. He was alienated by the political stance of the Catholic hierarchy, especially on the Spanish civil war, and by what Guillevic sees as the rigidity of established religion:

En somme, on pourrait dire que toute religion est une poésie qui a trop bien réussi et qui par là-même s'est figée, s'est sclérosée. Le travail de fouilles, de creusement s'est arrêté. Les choses sont données une fois pour toutes, et il n'y a qu'à commenter et appliquer. (VP, 36)

The other solution was the study and practice of literature. His first readings as a child were of pious literature: the *Génie du christianisme*, the *Imitation de Jésus Christ*, later Claudel. At the same time, he developed a passion for the fables of La Fontaine and the Romantics, Rousseau and Novalis. Attending secondary school in Alsace, his teacher of philosophy and the chance acquaintance of the Alsatian poet Nathan Katz led to the discovery of contemporaries such as Georg Trakl and, most importantly for his development as a poet, modern free verse. He also discovered the Surrealists, but he was unimpressed.

His reaction to Surrealism showed the gap that existed between this provincial poet and the literary circles of Paris. His move to the capital allowed not an assimilation into the mainstream, but a series of openings for his work.

He met the established poet Jean Follain, himself a civil servant, and through him was able to have a collection of eight poems, entitled *Requiem*, published by *Cahiers de Rochefort*. At the start of the war, he made friends with Marcel Arland, who soon after introduced him to the circle of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and who helped make possible the publication by Gallimard in 1942 of *Terraqué*. This was composed of the best poems written since 1930-31 and was practically ready when war broke out. In 1947 would appear *Exécutoire*, which Guillevic regards as the direct continuation of the previous collection.

This entry into the established literary circles, and the praise conferred on *Terraqué* went alongside Guillevic's joining the PCF in that year of publication. This gave rise to a curious double life. On the one hand, Guillevic became a close friend of Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, who praised his poetry for its Celtic vigour (1). On the other hand, Guillevic engaged in clandestine Resistance activity.

Guillevic's resistance activity extended also to his writing. In 1942 he made the acquaintance of Paul Eluard, who persuaded him to collaborate in the collection *Honneur des poètes* under the pseudonym of Serpières. But Guillevic's consciously resistance production was limited: when Eluard asked him to contribute to the second volume of *Honneur des poètes*, Guillevic replied that he had no more resistance poems, although *Exécutoire* had been completed. It was only after the Liberation that Guillevic agreed on how steeped in the atmosphere of war his poems had really been.

In conclusion, from this selective summary of Guillevic's life up until the Liberation, three features can be

identified that provide a context for his work. Firstly, there is oscillation between a sense of exclusion--from class, region and language--and a growing but problematic identification with the collective. Secondly, there is an opposition between the idea of holiness expressed in his relationship with nature and a distrust of established religion. And thirdly, there is a contrast between a background in the pre-modernity of Breton culture, and, in adult life, an experience of urban civilisation in Paris.

#### *Reference*

- 1) Drieu La Rochelle, "Notes vraiment peu politiques", *Nouvelle revue française*, 30, no.342 (août 1942), 229-237

## 1.2) HISTORY

In this chapter, I will briefly describe historical trends in literature and politics to which the first period of Guillevic's work is related. Firstly, I will outline the theme of the crisis of bonds between man and man and between man and nature. This will be followed by a description of the politics and literature of the resistance.

A major theme of the interwar period is the crisis of the bonds of blood and soil joining man to man and man to nature. Whether such bonds ever actually existed, this idea of unity is thrown into relief and given credence by the uncertainty and agitation unleashed by capitalist development--in other words, by the onset of what I choose to call "modernity". For politicians and writers, mechanisation and commerce had torn the bonds within which individual life was meaningful, and such bonds had to be restored. Beside the frosty, exposed arena of individual competition was the security and blood unity of the family home and rural life.

In politics, the theme of bonds of blood and soil was central to Fascism (1). In Germany, for example, the economic collapse of the Weimar Republic took place in a country where industrialisation was very recent, and where folk memory of rural, non-capitalist structures, however romanticised, was strong. This helps explain the undoubted appeal of Nazism. It was a desperate attempt to abolish intolerable contradictions, doing so by offering an alternative history, one of blood, soil and the authentic race.

In France, this theme found its political expression in Pétain's *Révolution nationale*. Rejecting what it saw as the "decadence" of cosmopolitan individualism, it proposed an alternative of the earth, rural society and the peasant way of life. It was based on the doctrine of the Catholic church and emphasised the importance of family life.

Related solutions to the nightmare of modernity were found in literature. In *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot describes the crisis of his civilisation in organic terms. The Waste Land of the Grail story--the arid plain--becomes the "unreal city" peopled by the living dead. Eliot suggests that, with the Fisher King, there is the faint possibility that the land may be restored. The crisis of European society can apparently be resolved by the organicity of the fertility cult.

In France, Jean Giono attacked what he saw as the threat posed by modernisation to the harmony between the peasant and the soil. In *Que ma joie demeure*, a rural commune which celebrates the *inutile*--birds, deer, that which can be admired but not manufactured into meat--lives alongside the frenzy of mechanisation. Giono, pessimistically sensing the drift of history, deflates this rural idyll, but nevertheless, outside literary production, was part of a short-lived ecological movement during this period (2).

Guillevic has affinities with this historical trend: distaste for modernity, valorisation of the family and intimate links with nature. But he comes out against the reactionary project of Fascism and gravitates towards the PCF. Much of his work in this period can be seen in the context of the Resistance and the PCF's role in it.



From the invasion of the USSR in June 1941 onwards, the Communist Party became the leading force in the resistance to the Nazi occupier and Pétainist collaboration, creating its own organisations and infiltrating broader fronts. The broad alliance became the order of the day, encompassing liberalism and patriotism as well as Bolshevism. From the Communist point of view, the war in the East had the effect of a grand plebiscite, a unanimous vote of confidence by the Russian people in their leadership. Communist prestige subsequently rose.

In the sphere of literature, resistance was everywhere outside the embattled *NRF* rump led by Drieu La Rochelle (3). Numerous clandestine publications appeared, the best known of which is perhaps Vercors' *Le Silence de la mer*. A new form of poetry appeared, adapted to the circumstances of the Occupation, called *contrebande*. This was passed by the censor, but contained coded attacks on the governing presence. High points of Resistance poetry were the two volumes entitled *L'Honneur des poètes* and Seghers' review, *Poésie*.

Several themes can be found in Resistance poetry. Firstly, there is an attempt to redefine *patrie*, using historical and cultural heritage, nature and the familiar poetic topos of love. There is resistance to essentialism and totalitarianism: against fatalism and immobility is posited man's ability to create himself. This man becomes a realm for struggle in the wider context of his relations with others and outside events. Linked to this, finally, is theme of the inadequacy of language. In the face of the propaganda of the Nazis and of Vichy, Resistance poems

attempt to create new, life-giving myths in a language of purity and truth.

In conclusion, Guillevic's work during this period can be related, in a certain way, to two historical trends. Firstly, the author's dissatisfaction with modern society draws him towards the theme of bonds of blood and soil expressed, in various ways, in literature and politics. Secondly, Guillevic's involvement in politics draws him towards a humanist and progressive current. By the end of this period, this current is the dominant. In 1945, Guillevic is a member of the French Communist Party at the moment of its highest prestige as *le Parti des fusillés*.

#### *References*

- 1) For a fuller discussion of Fascist ideology see Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (London, 1979)
- 2) See Walter Redfern, *The Private World of Jean Giono* (Oxford, 1967)
- 3) For a fuller discussion of Resistance poetry see Ann Longwell, "France, Man and Language" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1989)

### 1.3) THEME

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I will describe three main themes in Guillevic's work of this period, *Requiem*, *Terraqué* and *Exécutoire*. Firstly, there is the theme of man's separation from nature. Secondly, there is the presence of war and chaos. And thirdly, I describe the paths to salvation chosen by the poet.

#### *1) Man Against Nature*

Several features of man's relationship with nature can be identified in this period: man's inferiority and separateness in relation to nature; the denial of blood-ties; man's violation of nature; his subsequent guilt; and man's quest to restore intimate links.

The dominant concern for natural elements in Guillevic's early works shows a constant in the themes of his poetry: man's rootedness in the earth. As one "Chanson" in *Terraqué* puts it:

Homme et terre s'y sont faits--  
Et c'est tout ce que l'on sait. (T, 62)

But this relationship between man and nature is not an untroubled one. Instead, Guillevic has a dominant ethical concern: man has torn himself from nature, a grand reconciliation is needed.

In many of the poems, the speaker is disconcerted by the apparent self-sufficiency of things, which, in turn, throws into relief the sinfulness and inferiority of the human. In

"Fait-divers", the wood of the chair is acquitted of any complicity in a "crime" which, it is implied, is a peculiarly human affair. Beside the noise of the arguing humans, the thing exists in a state of repose:

Elle ne veut plus rien,  
Elle ne doit plus rien,  
Elle a son propre tourbillon,  
Elle se suffit. (T, 19)

This split between human and non-human appears sometimes as a conspiracy of the latter against the former. In "Les chevaux" (T, 26), the physical prowess and sobriety of the horses is accorded the respect of things around them, isolating the human city dwellers who, feverishly, "n'ont que faire".

This disruption of peace between man and nature is often presented as caused by the denial of blood-ties. The separation of man from nature is the separation of the son from the mother. In "Naissance" (T, 50), man is expelled from the warm enclosure of the womb into the cold exterior of necessity and lack. If this could be seen as the hand of fate, in other poems, a hostile relationship is described between son and mother. In "La chaux", the woman that the children long to caress turns into the source of pain:

Si blanche l'étrangère à ce pays de feuilles,  
A la sortie du bourg dans des caissons de bois,  
Elle attendait nos mains quand finissait l'école  
Et les tachait de rouge pour brûler. (T, 74)

In another poem, the home, traditional image of warmth and peace, becomes hard and cold, its "belly", here linking with the image of the mother, inhospitable:

La maison d'en face  
Et son mur de briques.

La maison de briques  
Et son ventre froid.

La maison de briques  
Où le rouge a froid. (T, 32)

Man has created such a situation by violating nature. In "Le maître", man is guilty of arrogating to himself the powers to destroy nature:

--J'ai brûlé des sapins qui ne voulait rien faire  
Et pas même un instant regarder le ravin--

Ainsi parlait quelqu'un qui se donnait pouvoir  
Sur les sapins et sur le feu,

Celui qui croyait savoir  
Ce qu'un sapin refuse ou veut. (Ex, 212)

Thus, the promethean affirmation of man's power does not go alongside respect for fellow things. For Guillevic, man is sinful and inferior. In another poem, he writes:

C'est étrange pourtant que ce soit la pluie  
Dans les tomates gonflées de rouge et de bien-être

Et dans la boue des villes  
Qu'on sent partout sur soi. (T, 28)

The poet is making a contrast between the decadence of urban civilisation and the plenitude of things.

If there is then a split between man and nature, it is not one that can remain intact. Instead, it is man's ethical imperative to respond to abused nature and bring peace back to his universe. This is the message of "Face":

Terre  
Comme une gorge irritée  
Demandant du lait,  
Femme sans mâle, colline  
Comme une fourmilière ébouillantée,  
Terre sans ventre, musique de cuivre:  
Face  
De juge. (T, 35)

A version of the Grail myth can be identified here: the kingdom has become arid, held by an evil spell which it is the son's duty to dispel in order to restore fertility. In the poem, the earth is demanding the life-giving forces of nourishment and sexual love. With man brutally separated

from the earth, it is his duty to embark on a quest to restore lost unity.

## 2) *Chaos and War*

In addition to the theme of man's antagonistic relationship with nature, there is the presence of chaos and war. Chaos is conveyed by the destructive passage of time and images of fragmentation; while the war-time atmosphere is conveyed by stories of betrayal and of the violent entry of horror into everyday life. Finally, Guillevic describes oppositions between good and evil which allow the possibility of resistance.

The passage of time is presented as negative in this first period of Guillevic's work. The desire to give stability and presence to temporal existence can only make do with brief instants of plenitude:

On ne possède rien, jamais,  
Qu'un peu de temps. (Ex, 167)

Guillevic's attitude towards time is melancholy. In one poem, there is the impossible desire to save from pervasive temporality a piece of existence against which to lie in foetal repose:

Notre désir était d'aller plus vite  
Et plus loin que le temps,  
  
De plonger avant lui dans le plomb de la masse  
Qui est ce qui n'est pas encore,  
(...)  
De saisir un objet  
Que le temps n'aurait pas encore habitué  
  
Et, couché contre lui près de la rive obscure,  
De voir le temps peiner vers nous  
A travers siècle et nuages. (Ex, 167-168)

The universe in Guillevic's early poems is characterised by upheaval and menace, expressed by images of

fragmentation. The wind, for example, is described as a malevolent force. Occupying space, it negates all stability, emptying and dispersing, for instance in "Elégies":

Il aura trop tenu  
Dans le fond de sa paume  
En face de la mer

Du sable que le vent  
Y prenait grain par grain

Celui que tient la peur  
De devenir nuage. (Ex, 145)

Further on in this poem, written during the Nazi Occupation, the image of the wind conveys the age of the spy-plane and informers:

A genoux sous le vent  
Qui fait sa confiance  
Au gouffre dans le ciel.

A genoux pour qu'il passe et nous voyant soumis  
N'en cherche pas plus long. (Ex, 148)

Strong in the inter-war and the war years is the spirit of betrayal: the betrayal of appeasement, Hitler's insincere declaration of no more land-claims for Greater Germany, the betrayal of France by Vichy. The natural images which conveyed man's sinfulness are also used to convey the sudden upheaval of the state of things. In "Ces meubles qui ne voulaient pas", the dog, which initially fulfils its role as man's best friend, all docility and domesticity, turns into a warmonger:

(...) se révéla bête des grands chemins  
Et du hasard, bête à batailles,  
Bête à mettre en lambeaux  
Celui qui siffle gai et qui cherche  
Qu'on l'accompagne. (7, 42)

This figure of destruction is described as perhaps in alliance with other creatures:

Le compagnon peut-être dans les champs  
Des guêpes terrifiantes qu'il allait joindre  
Ou commander. (7, 43)

In its historical context, "champs" and "guêpes terrifiantes" have strong connotations of land and air warfare. At the end of this poem, the dominant opposition in this period, of virtuous nature against sinful man, is inverted. The dog is

Gardien d'on ne sait quoi  
De nocturne et du sang  
Contre l'humain. (T, 43)

With things used here symbolically to describe the period of war-time, Guillevic is being drawn towards the humanist concerns of the Resistance.

A frequent theme in the poems in the first collections is the violent entry of horror. In the opening poem of the "Conscience" section of *Terraqué*, the farmyard, like the earth in "Face", cries out for the forces of life:

Quand le coq a crié  
La chair et le soleil,  
  
Quand la basse-cour entière  
A crié par le sol  
Par ses gorges d'insulte. (T, 58)

However, this desire for life, which is linked to dawn by the cock-crow, is met implacably by darkness and fear:

C'est la loi que la nuit  
S'annonce et prend contact  
Par ses mains de terreur. (T, 58)

At the end of the poem, against the violent outside occupied by violence there is posited an underground of tenderness both resisting and menaced, beautifully delicate yet fragile:

(...) les terriers connaissent  
Des corps tremblants et doux,  
Frêles comme du tréfle. (T, 58)

Peace is disturbed by an insurgent force of destruction. In "Bretagne", the mere trifle of the breaking of a bowl turns



to horror as the bowl is revealed to be the shattered skull  
of a child:

Il y a tant de morceaux blancs,  
De la vaisselle, de la cervelle  
Et quelques dents de mon enfant. (Ex, 233)

The irruption of horror in Guillevic's universe is not described, however, as so relentless and unavoidable as to suffocate action. Instead, the ethical concern of the poet leads him to place positive and negative together, offering the choice of resistance. Thus, in "Peut-être au-dessus du gouffre du plus rien" (T, 33), there is a choice between "la délivrance ou la torture avant demain". Guillevic suggests a way to deliverance:

(...) plier, déplier, comme ils feraient du temps,  
Un fil de fer trouvé, long pas plus que la pipe,

Qui prend presque des formes  
Où pouvoir s'agripper:

Dos d'un cheval, profil de chaise ou de bouteille

The creation of forms allows the possibility of, "s'agripper" suggests, the defeat of fragmentation. But the qualifying "presque" is important: with chaos ever-present, the wire may be flattened to produce the form of the moor, whose expanse, Guillevic concludes, can suck the subject into an abyss:

Où bien la lande

Tombant à pic sur un espace  
Où pas un oeil ne voudra voir.

A similar use of oppositions is found in "Eté". In this poem, images of life--the pregnant woman standing by an open door, the ripening fruit--are opposed by the discordant image of corpses lying under white sheets. But his image of death is placed alongside one of a young girl, holding a flame with an eye on the future. This use of ambivalence by

Guillevic creates a sense of uncertainty, but also allows space for hope of salvation.

### *3) Paths to Salvation*

Despite the melancholy tone of many early poems by Guillevic, there are nevertheless paths to salvation suggested. This is found in communion with things; in woman; in the sacred; and finally, there are suggestions of collective utopia that point to the next period of Guillevic's work.

In the first part of this chapter, man was described as separated from nature. Likewise, it is respect for things which redeems man. An attitude of care towards things provides an alternative to chaos and war. In one poem, in the midst of man-made destruction, an intimate relationship with things begins:

Pourtant quand il fut clair  
Que la ville flambait  
Dans le fracas des bombes,

Il osa tutoyer,  
Pour la première fois  
Les choses qu'il touchait  
Sur la table et les murs. (Ex, 204)

If, in "Le maître", man irresponsibly arrogated to himself the power to destroy nature, in "Le responsable" the good man confronts evil precisely through respect for things. He is a saintly figure, confronting the hostile elements:

Déjà, dans la prairie  
Et voyant la menace en clair sur tous les ciels,  
Il s'immolait au vent.

La pluie et l'horizon il en prenait sur lui  
Plus qu'un enfant peut en garder. (Ex, 214)

The suffering which he wishes to avenge creates solidarity between vegetal, animal and human:

Le bois cassé, la taupe éteinte et le vieil homme,  
Il désirait, pour leur vengeance,

Affronter l'ennemi qui ravage et qui rôde.

At the end of the poem, the point is made that this itinerary in the landscape is a necessary precondition for the salvation of men:

Il s'avavançait.

Plus tard, aussi, parmi les hommes,  
Il s'avança.

Just as man was challenged, for example in "Face", by the aridness of the mother-earth, so one path to salvation is union between man and woman. Guillevic merges female and natural. Woman's fertility fuses human and non-human:

Ecoute encore: ton pollen au pollen des rochers  
Se mélange sur mer,  
Ton ventre amène et retire les marées,  
Ton sexe occupe les sables chauds des profondeurs.  
(T, 105)

In turn, sexual love offers the possibility of being cleansed:

Tous les suintements sont lavés dans la mer.

Et l'homme peut le soir retrouver dans un lit  
Le goût frais de la mer  
Entre des cuisses ouvertes. (T, 107)

Woman is also longed for as a means of escape from urban life:

--loin de ta gorge,  
Comme l'on souffre dans la ville,

Comme ta robe  
Promet le bon, le long repos. (T, 101)

The restoration of lost unity is also conveyed by images of the sacred. In "Rites", for example, man and nature are

reconciled by the gesture of throwing water gathered from a ditch:

Un jour il faudra  
Prendre avec ses mains  
De l'eau d'un fossé.

Pour qu'en tombe une goutte  
Au hasard du vent,  
Sur un mur perdu  
Entre bois et près.

--Parce que c'est la pierre,  
Parce que c'est l'eau,  
Parce que c'est nous. (T, 84)

Such a gesture is a form of baptism which gives unity and strength to man and things. But at the same time, this holy rite is "profane" in the sense that it takes place in the material world, in the open air, outside the confines of any church, and makes no reference to God.

Finally, another way to salvation is suggested by Guillevic's move towards political commitment. The social orientation of the poet is not stable. The melancholy found in many of the poems of this period--separation from the family, from the lover, the destructive passage of time, the sinfulness of man--leads to the image of the solitary figure turning his back on society:

Le barde qu'on moquait  
Ne se fâchait jamais,

Tant la lande est grande. (T, 88)

The description of language in this period also points to a difficult relationship with society. Language is seen as a difficult, objective thing to be struggled with:

Les mots, les mots  
Ne se laissent pas faire  
Comme des catafalques

Et toute langue  
Est étrangère. (T, 138)

On the positive side, the successful use of language overcomes chaos. Just as in "C'est peut-être au-dessus" the bending of the wire into shapes allowed man to "s'agripper", so the crafting of language founds a stable world:

Si les orages ouvrent des bouches  
Et si la nuit perce en plein jour,  
(...)  
--Il s'est agi depuis toujours  
De prendre pied,

De s'en tirer  
Mieux avec la main du menuisier  
Avec le bois. (T, 140)

It can be seen from this that the kinetic language of commitment, based on the belief that words change the world, is missing. Here language may *resist* chaos, but it is not yet the harbinger of collective utopia. It will take the movement to Communist *engagement* to recast the word as weapon.

But the *engagement* of the next period is anticipated. The tone of the poems is combative and hopeful. In "Ce soir encore l'étang", a hostile environment is met by the collective resolution to fight for humanity:

Nous construirons.  
Nous liquiderons la peur. De la nuit  
Nous ferons du jour plus tendre--

Et nous n'aurons besoin  
Que du toucher des peaux. (T, 77)

Similarly, in "Dans le ventre rouge et noir", the hell in which the people suffer will, the poet suggests, be overcome by the self-liberation of that people:

(...) ce peuple un jour s'y refuse,  
Aussi désirant que du feu de bois,

Et troue la paroi vers dehors,  
Pour vivre.

The experience of the resistance leads Guillevic to give importance to political commitment. In "Souvenir", the death

of the Communist Gabriel Péri enters the collective memory  
and persists and reminds:

(...) c'est vrai que des morts  
Font sur terre un silence  
Plus fort que le sommeil. (Ex,240)

### *Conclusion*

The poetry of this period is dominated by negative themes--  
man's sinfulness and inferiority, the horror of war--which  
will disappear for long periods in Guillevic's subsequent  
work. But within this period are elements which will be  
developed: humanist commitment; the rootedness of man in  
matter; salvation in sexual love; and an unconventional  
notion of the sacred.

## 1.4) FORM

*Introduction*

In this chapter, I will outline formal features of this period of Guillevic's work. I will begin by looking at the first published poem of the author, "Bruyère", which is characterised by simplicity of language and use of antithesis. I will then examine the different uses of antithesis in his poems. Finally, I will describe the didactic style of some of Guillevic's poems and its development towards committed writing.

*1) Guillevic's Use of Antithesis*

I will begin this formal survey by looking at the first poem of *Requiem*, "Bruyère".

Un brin seul  
Sous les pins se dessèche.

Le reste par milliers  
S'offre encore aux abeilles,  
Offre encore sa couleur  
Au jour gris. (1)

Several points can be made about the style of this poem. There is the simplicity of the poem's language: the grammaticality of the sentences and of their splitting into lines. The chain of elements is coherent: sprig of heather, bees, and sky are all consistent with a moorland scene. The title itself is simple and abrupt. Finally, there is an absence of pronouns.

The style of this poem is austere: apart from the personification suggested by "s'offre", there is not the

metaphor or the *je* typical of the lyric. Guillevic is placing the thing, in this case heather, at the centre of his poem.

The structure of the poem is based on the use of antithesis. The division of the poem into two line-groups separates the solitary sprig from the multitude of heather. In turn, the negative "se dessèche" meets its opposite "couleur". But this process does not end there: the splitting of the final phrase creates a contrast between "couleur" and "jour gris". The story of the poem is melancholy: if the image of death in the first line-group is overwhelmingly compensated by the flourishing rest of heather, this too is undermined by the greyness of weather, which anticipates autumnal death. The use of antithesis tells a story of inevitable destruction.

Guillevic is taking natural elements, placing them in parallelism, allowing the reader to infer symbolically. Such use of antithesis is used throughout this period, either to convey pessimism similar to that in "Bruyère" or to convey ambivalence.

The negative closure found in "Bruyère" is also found in "Arrière-plage".

Rocs, on vous guette--et votre soif  
Attise un vent plus dur que le toucher des vagues.  
Vous serez sable sec au goût de désespoir,  
Strié du vent.

Bon pour la litière aux coquillages,  
Que la mer pour la mort  
Jugea et rejeta.

This is a narrative at high speed: in the first line, the speaker tells the rocks of the threat of erosion; in the final line, the past historic implies the distant memory of their erosion. The poem is a series of reversals that negate



all stability. The rocks, which can be imagined as standing like guards over the sea, are themselves stalked. Instead of the wind causing thirst, the thirst of the rock causes the strengthening of the wind. In turn, "soif" is not met by moisture but by the dryness of sand. Finally, the helplessness of the rocks is consummated by their being the cradle for shells, which are themselves enveloping beings.

Both "Bruyère" and "Arrière-plage" are structures of negation, structured as a series of reversals. This is a pessimistic use of antithesis. Other poems use antithesis to express openness and uncertainty, for example, the opening poem of *Terraqué*.

L'armoire était de chêne  
Et n'était pas ouverte.

Peut-être qu'il en serait tombé des morts  
Peut-être qu'il en serait tombé du pain.

Beaucoup de morts.  
Beaucoup de pain. (7, 17)

The first two lines promise a story: there is a secret to be found out, the wardrobe being closed and solidly armoured. But the promise of the truth being revealed is unfulfilled. Instead, there is a move to hypothesis, with "peut-être", and ambivalence, with grammatical and syllabic equivalence placing "pain" and "mort" into direct opposition. The repetitions and the directness of the language impose on the reader the unresolved nature of the conflict between life and death.

Another example of the poem's form conveying an either/or question is "C'est peut-être au-dessus".

C'est peut-être au-dessus du gouffre du plus rien  
Et du noir attendu à l'entrée des forêts,

Peut-être aussi devant des choses plus amères:  
La délivrance où la torture avant demain,

Cette manie encore aux doigts roses et nourris,  
 Désireux tous les jours des caresses et du jeu,

De plier, déplier, comme ils feraient du temps,  
 Un fil de fer trouvé, long pas plus que la pipe,

Qui prend presque des formes  
 Où pouvoir s'agripper:

Dos d'un cheval, profil de chaise ou de bouteille,  
 Ou bien la lande

Tombant à pic sur un espace  
 Où pas un oeil ne voudra voir. (T, 33)

This poem takes the form of a single sentence, split into three by colons, which convey a series of transformations. In the first part, the places where anguish is felt are hypothesised; in the second, this anguish is described and its cure suggested by the bending of the wire into forms; in the third, there is the practice of bending the wire, but this itself becomes problematic. This conflictual, unstable situation is reinforced by the use, in the first line, of the demonstrative clause: the "ce" provokes puzzlement in the reader, which is only ended in the fourth line. In addition to this, the repeated use of modal adverbs and verbs--"peut-être", "presque", "pouvoir"--conveys uncertainty.

The struggle for order amidst chaos is expressed at the level of prosody. The lines of the poem move towards and veer away from stability. Some words of this poem are traditionally poetic--"gouffre", "délivrance"--and indeed, lines of the poem veer towards traditional alexandrine form. Lines 2-4, 7-8 and line 11 are twelve syllables in length. Line 2 has a classical stress pattern of 3+3/3+3. But this alexandrine form is imperfect: in line 7, for instance, the alexandrine is buckled to coincide with the folding of the

wire, its stress-pattern 3+3/4+2. The imperfection of the poem's prosody is added to by lines 1, 5 and 6, whose 13-syllable length is discordant alongside the alexandrines. This prosodic instability comes temporarily to an end in lines 9 and 10, where the two hexasyllabic lines coincide with the theme of finding form. In line 11, the positive forms created are described by an alexandrine with an even 4/4/4 stress-pattern. But this stability is again undermined by the short line 12. A new group of octosyllabic lines appears to convey the option of the "gouffre du plus rien". Such prosodic instability gives extra structure and meaning to the theme of the poem.

## *2) Didactic Style*

In the previous chapter, I described how in this period, a melancholy view of the world is accompanied by an ethical imperative to change it. The separation of man from nature, and the presence of chaos and war, push the subject to take paths to salvation. Similarly, in the style of the poems, the dysphoria and uncertainty conveyed by the use of contradiction goes alongside a didactic style.

An example of the didactic style of many Guillevic poems in this period is "Le responsable".

Déjà, dans la prairie,  
Et voyant la menace en clair sur tous les ciels,  
Il s'immolait au vent.

La pluie et l'horizon il en prenait sur lui  
Plus qu'un enfant peut en garder.

Le bois cassé, la taupe éteinte et le vieil homme,  
Il désirait, pour leur vengeance,

Affronter l'ennemi qui ravage et qui rôde.  
Il s'avancait.

Plus tard, parmi les hommes,  
Il s'avance. (Ex, 214)

I described in the previous chapter how the message of this poem is that friendship with things is necessary for the redemption of man. Formally, this poem has the cohesion and the progression of the parable, describing the itinerary of the exemplary man. The language used by the poet gives the description mythopoeic resonance: a transfigured sky, the universality of "tous les ciels", "l'ennemi" and "les hommes". Guillevic uses inherited religious imagery: the martyrdom suggested by "s'immolait", the burden of cares suggested by "il en prenait sur lui"; and the beast implied by "ravage et qui rôde" is consistent with the natural scene, but suggests Satan.

A similar didactic style is found in "Rites" in *Terraquè*. There are general, prescriptive statements, for instance, "un jour il faudra", "vivre, c'est apprendre". There is frequent use of infinitives—"mordre, mettre, appliquer, s'asseoir". The effect of them is to make these activities ideal: it is exemplary conduct to be adopted. Strung together in this poem, the infinitives create an incantatory tone, linking up with the religious title.

Some of the didactic poems of this period connect up with the discourse of promise that dominates the next period of Guillevic's poetry. An example is "Dans le ventre rouge et noir". At the beginning of the poem, the people are described as having fallen into a "belly" which denies desired peace:

Ce n'est pas ici  
Qu'on pourra tenir de la paix entre ses mains.

The description plays upon a reversal: the softness of the mother's womb has become coldness and inhospitability:

Ici s'amenuise un peuple fourbu  
Tenu à merci dans le ventre froid  
Et rien ne va  
Que vers mourir et vers le froid.

But if, in "Bruyère" and "Arrière-plage", the semantic reversals ended at the negative, in this poem Guillevic finishes on a positive note. Despite the negatives and the reversal of the mother image, liberation remains a possibility:

A moins que ce peuple un jour s'y refuse  
Aussi désirant que du feu de bois,  
  
Et troue la paroi vers dehors,  
Pour vivre.

### *Conclusion*

Although contradiction is frequently used in this period of Guillevic's work, the structure of the poems is changeable, expressing different sides to the writer's world-view: structures of negation to express pessimism; open structure to express uncertainty; and positive endings to express hope. In the next period, the didactic style and the future-oriented structure coincide in committed Stalinist writings. Open structure and structures of negation will reappear at different points in Guillevic's career to respond to changes in his world-view. What is constant in Guillevic's work is the simplicity of language: the lack of lyricism, be it through metaphor or adjective, and the everyday grammaticality of the poet's diction.

### *Reference*

- 1) Serge Gaubert, ed., *Lire Guillevic* (Seyssel, 1984), 143

## 1.5) EXPLICATION--"Les charniers" (Ex, 241-246)

- 1) Passez entre les fleurs et regardez  
Au bout du pré c'est le charnier.

Pas plus de cent, mais bien en tas,  
Ventre d'insecte un peu géant  
Avec des pieds à travers tout.

Le sexe est dit par les souliers,  
Les regards ont coulé sans doute.

--Eux aussi  
Préfèraient les fleurs.

- 2) A l'un des bords du charnier,  
Légèrement en l'air et hardie,

Une jambe--de femme  
Bien sûr--

Une jambe jeune  
Avec un bas noir

Et une cuisse,  
Une vraie,

Jeune--et rien.  
Rien.

- 3) Le linge n'est pas  
Ce qui pourrit le plus vite.

On en voit par là,  
Durci de matières

Il donne apparence  
De chairs à cacher qui tiendraient encore.

- 4) Combien ont su pourquoi,  
Combien sont morts sachants,  
Combien n'ont pas su quoi?

Ceux qui auront pleuré,  
Les yeux sont tout pareils,

C'est des trous dans des os  
Ou c'est du plomb qui fond.

- 5) Ils ont dit oui  
A la pourriture.

Ils ont accepté,  
Ils nous ont quittés.

Nous n'avons rien à voir

Avec leur pourriture.

- 6) On va, autant qu'on peut,  
Les séparer,

Mettre chacun d'eux  
Dans un trou à lui,

Parce qu'ensemble  
Ils font trop de silence contre le bruit.

- 7) Si ce n'était pas impossible,  
Absolument,

On dirait une femme  
Comblée par l'amour  
Et qui va dormir.

- 8) Quand la bouche est ouverte  
Ou bien ce qui en reste,

C'est qu'ils ont dû chanter,  
Qu'ils ont crié victoire,

Ou c'est le maxillaire  
Qui leur tombait de peur.

--Peut-être par hasard  
Et la terre est entrée.

- 9) Il y a des endroits où l'on ne sait plus  
Si c'est la terre glaise ou si c'est la chair

Et l'on est peureux que la terre, partout,  
Soit pareille et colle.

- 10) Encore s'ils devenaient aussitôt  
Des squelettes,

Aussi nets et durs  
Que de vrais squelettes

Et pas cette masse  
Avec la boue.

- 11) Lequel de nous voudrait  
Se coucher parmi eux.

Une heure, une heure ou deux,  
Simplement pour l'homme.

- 12) Où est la plaie  
Qui fait réponse?

Où est la plaie  
Des corps vivants?

Où est la plaie--  
Pour qu'on la voie,

Qu'on la guérisse.

- 13) Ici  
Ne repose pas,  
  
Ici ou là, jamais  
Ne reposera  
  
Ce qui reste,  
Ce qui restera  
De ces corps-là.

### *Introduction*

"Les charniers" is generally applauded by the critics as a good example of *poésie de circonstance*. Luc Decaunes, although attacking Guillevic's later Communist poetry, singles "Les charniers" out for praise (1); while Pierre Daix, from a different political viewpoint, applauds the poet's emerging "humanism". I also have a positive view of "Les charniers". But why? How does this poem satisfy the political and ostensibly "non-political" reader? What makes a committed poem "good"? I will begin by explicating this poem, giving attention to theme and form. This will be followed by a summary of Predrag Matvejevitch and Ian Higgins' views on the problem of *poésie de circonstance* and aesthetic worth. In my conclusion, I will use their criteria to explain the success of "Les charniers".

#### *1) Explication*

"Les charniers" was written by Guillevic in reaction to the discovery of the Nazi concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. It is his own attempt to come to terms with a horror which caused a generation to ask about the potential evil of humanity, and a generation of poets, in



particular, to question the worth of culture. The theme and form of this poem convey a failed attempt to normalise the unprecedented event that was the occasion for "Les charniers".

The poem begins with the interpellation of the reader: like the inhabitants of Weimar, commanded by the invading forces to visit the camp at Buchenwald they lived apparently unaware of, the speaker is commanding the reader to discover horror. *Vous* are entering upon a path that leads to shock: flowers and meadows are the stuff of peace-time nature poetry; here, instead, the speaker is leading the reader to the extreme limit where a hidden place of death is. After the first two lines, another estrangement takes place: the orderliness of "bien en tas" is disturbed by the representation of the corpses as a giant insect. From these first lines, there is no reason to believe, except intuitively, that human beings are being described. Indicators of humanness follow, but they too defamiliarise: sex is determined by the shoes, implying physical indeterminacy; the eyes, focus of life, have lost their consistency. When the voice juts in at the end of this opening section, it is reinforcing the gap that has opened between the outsiders surrounded by the image of peace, flowers, and the focus of attention, the victims.

Once inside the scene of slaughter, Guillevic plays upon this gap between living and dead. Attempts are made at rendering familiar the scene, but they are relentlessly undermined. The corpses deny human attributes and the erotic; their otherness disturbs the onlooker.

The corpses attract an erotic description, only to deny it. In the second section, a desiring male gaze progresses only to fall back: movement of detail from the stocking to the thigh to its youth suggests sexual interest. But this is abruptly deflated by "rien". The sexual interest returns in section seven, but "on dirait" conveys the impossibly hypothetical nature of the description.

If the flesh of the corpses denies the erotic, more generally, it denies the familiarity of the human form. In section 3, what is implied to be rotting flesh is "durci de matières" and only gives a semblance of flesh. This results, in section nine, in a confusion of earth and flesh. The unity of the human form has collapsed into the preformal state of "terre glaise". In section ten, the observer reacts to this by hypothesising a return to clear form with the corpses' reduction to the skeletal.

Apart from physical description, there is also a gap between living and dead. The questions of section four create a division between past and present, between the inaccessible minds of the dead and the inquiring living. This division is reinforced by the lack of an answer, merely the reiteration of the bruterality of the victims' deaths. In section five, the victims' acceptance of deportation leads the speaker to declare that we have nothing to do with their state of degradation: this both reinforces the theme of the victims' difference from the living, and proposes a more knowledgeable and combative stance in the future. This shows an unsentimental view of the victims, which is repeated in section eight. At first, there is stated the belief that the victims "ont crié victoire" before dying,

but this heroic view is undermined. The open mouth of the victim that might sing or cry out is mutilated as "ce qui en reste". The cry of resistance becomes the utterly physiological "maxillaire" dropping in abjectness. This undermining of sentimentality is reinforced in the final lines, where hazard denies the conscious agency of the potential hero.

Guillevic is therefore overturning any easy assumptions about the victims: that they are desirable, that they are identifiably human, or that they behave as we might expect them to. The corpses act as a mental block or fissure. For this reason, in section six, the gesture of separating the corpses for burial is not simply a mark of respect; it is also an attempt to deal with their disturbing otherness.

After this attempt at coming to terms with the sight of the victims of the camp, in section twelve, the orientation of the speaker shifts to an address to society in the present. The question asked continues the process of defamiliarisation: how can living bodies also have wounds? In the aftermath of the camps, Guillevic is pointing to an illness in humanity that must be cured. But, in keeping with the uncertainty of the poem, there is no solution put forward. Instead, the poem ends on the persistent reminder of the victims. The final section defamiliarises the epitaph. The corpses do not rest in peace, but instead, remain alive into the future, demanding action.

This poem does have a didactic style. At the beginning, Guillevic interpellates *vous*, and at the end of the itinerary asks them to think of what has happened. But "Les charniers" is not about providing ready-made answers to

contemporary problems: instead, it is about the way in which events challenge assumptions and undermine confidence. This challenge is expressed by the fragmentary nature of the poem. There is no coherent description of the scene, leading to a lesson. Instead, each section deals with a detail of description or a particular thought that springs to mind about the camps. The language of the poem is questioning, hypothetical, often couched in terms of conjecture—"peut-être", "on dirait"—which express the gap between living and dead. Many of the sections are structured so as to disturb any description. In section two, for example, gaps between line-groups and the layering of syntax—"Et une cuisse,/Une vraie,/Jeune"—conveys the progression of the gaze, only to be deflated, after a dash, by "Rien", repeated and isolated for force.

Together, form and content convey the difficulty of imposing order on the extraordinary. What is consistent in the poem is its intense emotion.

## 2) *The Problem of poésie de circonstance*

After having explicated this poem, I will attempt to explain the success of "Les charniers" as a *poème de circonstance*. Before doing so, I will look briefly at the history of the problems of poetry linked to events and political organisations.

Predrag Matvejevitch, in *Poétique de l'événement*, characterises the history of poetry as the victory of artistic freedom over the command and control exercised by patronage. With the break-up of hierarchical, feudal

society, and the advent of industrialisation, there is an assertion of the autonomy of poetic practice and, especially in the case of the Symbolists, a refusal of circumstance.

For Matvejevitch, *poésie de circonstance* is caught within two oppositions:

*nécessité/volonté*  
*singularité/universalité*

In the first opposition, will is necessary in order to set off poetic practice, but excessive willpower may suppress spontaneity in favour of the mechanical and formulaic. In the second, the relative and ephemeral nature of a political event must be transcended: the event must be universalised so that it may be appropriated by a wider community in time and space.

These concerns are developed by Ian Higgins in the Introduction to his *Anthology of Second World War Poetry*. Trying to answer the question, "Can *poésie de circonstance* be good?", he takes as his premiss that good poetry is a denial or negation of the way the world is. A poem, Higgins argues, draws attention to the relation between language and what it denotes, by imagery, syntactic deformation or ambiguity, and manipulation of sound and rhythm. A political tract, however, does not examine such a relationship, instead using cliché, demagogic repetition and overstatement, and invocation of precursors: it is a rallying-cry. Whereas the tract simply takes existing linguistic usages for granted, in an attempt to reinforce the political doctrine, the poem actually presents the episode—for instance, the execution of hostages—as a challenge to expression, and is a response to that challenge.

The problem is therefore posed: can the developed autonomy of poetry be reconciled with the collective? Can the playful, iconoclastic nature of modern poetry co-exist with the everyday power-claims of politics? Can "making strange" exist for long without the certainty of the *parti pris*? Will the utterance fade with the political moment?

### *Conclusion*

"Les charniers" fulfils the criteria for success provided by Matvejevitch and Higgins. Firstly, the poem achieves universality. Certainly, the reader of 1945 will recognise the concentration camps as theme—he will be helped by a Picasso painting of the same title. But there is no definite reference to Nazism or other historical events that may set off specialised opinions in the minds of readers that close the poem off in the space of a particular academic debate. Yes, the questions posed in the poem—why did they die? did they know? what is the evil in man and how can it be overcome?—were posed at the time, but as long as these questions continue to be posed in the continual hurt that is history, the poem may be considered relevant.

Secondly, the poem fulfils the function of drawing attention to the relation between language and what it denotes. Yes, the poem is rhetorical, implicating the reader and demanding a response, but the modality of the speaker is that of questioning and hypothesis. There is no certain answer at the end of the poem, only the certainty of the question. The poem dramatises the response to circumstance. A whole series of gaps open up in the mind of the observer:

between human and non-human, present and past, form and formlessness, eros and death. Making strange, "Les charniers" deals shocks to us at the levels of imagery and structure.

#### *Reference*

- 1) Luc Decaunes, "Un poète fourvoyé", in *Poésie au grand jour* (Paris, 1982), 61-67

## SECTION 2--THE COMMUNIST SOLUTION



This section is devoted to the committed Communist writing of Guillevic. The section will be split into two parts: part A dealing with his work until *Terre à bonheur*, part B dealing with the episode of *Poésie nationale*. Each part will be given biographical and historical background. At the end of the section, there will be explications of a poem from each part. In this section, I will be referring to the original editions of these collections. In the final chapter of the section, I will examine the re-editions of these collections and explain how they express Guillevic's views on his past commitment as *poète-militant*.

## PART A

## 2.1) BIOGRAPHY 1946-1953

In this chapter, I will describe how, in the immediate post-War period, 1945-1953, Guillevic's work, politics and art became closely intertwined.

Guillevic's career as a civil servant followed the movement of political life in France, from Reconstruction to the Cold War. In November 1945, Guillevic joined the cabinet of François Billoux, Communist minister for the economy, and was put in charge of economic control. He followed Billoux, in January 1946, to the ministry for Reconstruction and remained there until March 1947 when the Communists were thrown out of the government. Working in this ministry he had various tasks: laws on war damage, housing and urban planning. Working very hard, and to the detriment of his reading and writing, this period was nevertheless fruitful: "L'expérience a été intéressante, car j'ai vu ce qu'être homme d'action...et de pouvoir." (VP, 138)

After the fall of the Communists, Guillevic became *inspecteur de l'Economie nationale*. But the Cold War had ensued, with consequences for his career. In 1949, his Minister tried to have him demoted for signing a petition in support of striking miners. He moved to work in North African economic affairs, but in subsequent years any promotion was refused to him for political reasons, and very little work of quality was given to him to do.

In his general political outlook, Guillevic was imbued with the atmosphere of the Cold War:

C'était le temps de ce que l'on a appelé "la guerre froide". Nous pratiquions alors un mode de pensée, mes amis et moi, qui simplifiait tout à l'extrême. C'était d'une surprenante naïveté, d'un manichéisme qui me semble aujourd'hui à la limite du supportable. (TB, 119)

Guillevic's manichean world-view, of a conflict between socialist progress and capitalist imperialism, led him to ignore troubling developments in Eastern Europe:

Dans ce climat de guerre froide, j'avais choisi mon camp. J'écoutais mes camarades, pas nos adversaires. Tout le négatif que je pouvais entendre sur Staline, sur l'URSS et ses "satellites" était pour moi des racontars (...) Les innocents, c'étaient les victimes des fascismes et des impérialismes. (VP, 144)

A striking example of this political outlook was a poem "Au camarade Staline", which appeared in *Envie de vivre* in 1950. His panegyric to a tyrant may now seem extremely dubious and misguided, but then he was part of a justifiable Stalin cult:

Combien de résistants sont morts en criant "Vive Staline"? Pour eux, comme pour moi, Staline n'était pas un tyran. Il incarnait la résistance au nazisme, la lutte des peuples de l'Union soviétique, l'espoir dans "les lendemains qui chantent" auxquels croyait au moment d'être fusillé Gabriel Péri (...) Staline continuait à incarner la lutte pour ces lendemains-là et contre l'impérialisme américain. (VP, 145)

This political commitment flowed directly into his writing. On a formal level, Guillevic became treasurer of the *Comité national des Ecrivains*. During this period, poetry became for him subordinate to a wider civic duty:

Nous pensions animer la réalisation d'une autre société. Cette tâche nous requérait foncièrement, si bien que (...) je regardais la poésie sans passion, elle ne me paraissait pas l'essentiel, ni d'une manière générale, ni pour moi en particulier. Position exactement contraire à celle que j'ai maintenant. Je me vouais aux tâches du militant, la lutte pour la paix, pour de meilleures conditions de vie, la bataille du livre, etc. (VP, 140)

If, in the previous period, poetry was a means of resistance and of attaining order, now experience of political life leads Guillevic to doubt the worth of poetry itself. Guillevic once told a friend: "S'il faut vraiment renoncer à être poète pour être utile, je renonce." (*VP*, 149)

## 2.2) HISTORY

In this chapter, I will sketch the onset of the Cold War in France and in the world; Zhdanov's theory of the "two camps" and of socialist realism, and the adoption of these views by the French Communist Party.

This period begins with the swift collapse of the French post-War settlement. The PCF emerged from the resistance as the largest and most popular party in France. In elections in 1945-1946, the Party gained five million votes, and in October 1945, 161 seats in the National Assembly. The Communists were given five cabinet seats in a coalition government whose aim was reconstruction. They were hard-working partners in government, outlining plans for social provision while ensuring, through the CGT, a fragile industrial peace.

But this consensus did not last long. In March 1947, the Communists opposed the government in a vote of confidence—an act immediately followed by their expulsion by Ramadur, the *Président du conseil*. Freed from the responsibilities of office, with pent-up frustration at the disappointment of revolutionary hopes, the Communists unleashed a wave of political strikes which often resulted in violent clashes between workers and the CRS. At this moment, the PCF entered upon a period of isolationism from which it has never really emerged: a counter-culture, linked to a specific class, spurned by the Socialists, considered an alien implantation.

This collapse of the post-War settlement coincided with the onset of the Cold War. The brief romance of the "Allies" came to an end as East and West began staking out their

"spheres of influence". Churchill began the process of intervention in the political affairs of another people with the war in Greece against Markos and Beloyannis. This was soon followed by Stalinist putsches throughout Eastern Europe. The Yalta agreement had foreseen free, unrestricted elections, as early as possible, on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot. In the East, this was ignored: in Poland, the Peasant Party was repressed and elections rigged; in Bulgaria, parties were violently bundled into a "Patriotic Front"; while in Hungary, the Communists could only muster a respectable but modest 17% of the vote.

Event upon event drove international tension to crisis point. In West Germany, the Marshall Plan, monetary reform and the formation of the Federal Republic. In the East, the break with Tito, the show-trial of the Hungarian minister for the Interior Rajk, and the Czech *coup d'état*. The creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the affairs of the Rosenbergs and Fuchs, the explosion of the Soviet atomic bomb, the Chinese Revolution and the Korean War all created the cold confrontation of two different systems.

This new polarisation was given expression by Stalin's minister for cultural affairs, Zhdanov. At the first meeting of Kominform in September 1947, Zhdanov divided the world into two warring camps, Communism and Capitalism, describing the USA's expansionism with the aim of world domination.

The words of Zhdanov found a receptive audience in the PCF, which published many contributions by the commissar throughout the late 1940s. This was the time of the PCF at its most Stalinist. The War had played a decisive role in transforming the Stalin cult from the plausible to the

absurd. In the period leading up to his death, and for a year or two after, Stalin was presented as leader of nation and Party, father and spiritual symbol, expert in all domains. The extent of the deification of this man is conveyed by the author, André Stil:

It is true, they think, it is well known that everyone has a little of STALIN at the bottom of him, which watches us from inside, smiling and serious, giving confidence. It is our consciences as communists, this internal presence of Stalin. (1)

With this, the PCF saw its basic task as defending the Soviet Union. Russia was understandably invested with hope, presented as a society founded on the absolute respect of the necessary conditions for the satisfaction of human need. A poem by Eluard conveys this idealism:

Frères, l'URSS est le seul chemin libre  
Par où nous passerons pour atteindre la paix  
Une paix favorable au doux désir de vivre  
La nuit se fait toute petite  
Et la terre reflète un avenir sans tache.(2)

Such manicheism had two consequences. Firstly, the difficulties in Eastern Europe were effaced. The suppression of democratic rights and the revelation of labour camps were met by either disbelief or by counter-statements emphasising land-reforms, education and anti-Fascism. Secondly, the PCF took up a violently anti-American stance. The Marshall Plan was rejected as an attempt by Wall Street to destroy the economic independence of the European states. Much was made of the use of napalm and anthrax in the Korean War, of the Rosenberg affair, and of the intervention in Guatemala. The foundation of the *Mouvement de la Paix* channelled anti-American feeling into an apparently non-sectarian campaign against NATO and rearmament.

Zhdanovism appeared in the cultural sphere with the adoption of the doctrine of socialist realism. In 1934, the first congress of the Union of Soviet Writers had called for a sincere, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. It was what Zhdanov called a "revolutionary romanticism" whose role was the formation and ideological education of the workers in the spirit of socialism. A socialist realist work would trace the movement from necessity to freedom, representing the regeneration of peasants in the factories, the transformation of minorities into internationalists. It would be, Zhdanov explained, an art pointed towards the future:

At the same time as we select Soviet man's finest feelings and qualities and reveal his future to him, we must show our people what they should not be like and castigate the survivals from yesterday that are hindering the Soviet people's progress. (3)

After the War, at the Party congress of 1947, Maurice Thorez championed such a didactic, historically aware art:

To decadent works of bourgeois aesthetes, partisans of art for art's sake, to the pessimism without solution and the retrograde obscurantism of the existentialist "philosophers" we have opposed an art which should be inspired by socialist realism, an art which would aid the working class in its struggle for liberation. (4)

Here there is a clear distinction between the artistic and the political avant-gardes. Emphasis is on the mass movement: the work should be immediately and widely comprehended, and at the service of the class struggle. For Roger Garaudy, the work is "a force, a tool or a weapon, to make the dreams of today become the reality of tomorrow" (5). In other words, the materiality of the word has changed. For the Symbolist, the word was involved in an alchemical reaction, creating a work of art unrelated to the capitalist modernity of production and exchange. For the Stalinist,



literary production meets industrial production: the writer is a veritable engineer of the soul, engaged in the rational subjugation of nature and the military defeat of the enemy. With this, the word becomes scientific: once linked to the objective laws of history—as interpreted by the Communists—the word is infallible. As Louis Aragon exhorted, "Write the Stalinist truth!" (6).

The work of Guillevic of this period is written in the context of an extremely polarised situation: violent class struggle in France; the sharp division between the blocs. In this period, the political gains supreme importance, with the result that poetry as an activity in its own right is undervalued.

#### *References*

- 1) David Caute, *Communism and the French Intellectuals* (London, 1964), 219
- 2) *ibid.* 167
- 3) *ibid.* 326-327
- 4) *ibid.* 327
- 5) *ibid.* 328
- 6) *ibid.* 328

## 2.3) THEME

*Introduction*

In this period, the dominant theme of the previous section, the conflict between the human and the non-human, is replaced by the conflict between Communism and Capitalism. Nature becomes allegory of Communist struggle; man ceases to be inferior and triumphs. Adherence to the Party becomes crucial and collectivism is celebrated. Guillevic takes the side of progress in contemporary struggles; and art becomes politically committed.

*1) Nature as Allegory of the Communist Struggle*

In Guillevic's poems of this period, nature is a site for struggle and is progressive. This investment of spirit in nature is a familiar theme in poetry: the landscape either reflects or opaquely refuses the desires of the poet. The linking of this *topos* to the socialist struggle creates, during this period, what can be called a "socialist pathetic fallacy": nature is allegory of the struggle for a future Communist victory.

In "Dedans", for example, at the beginning of this poem, the landscape is cold and inhospitable to *nous*:

La bruyère n'était pas à boire  
Ni le ciel, et c'était l'automne  
Dans les nuages. (G, 132)

But this blighted state does not last. With the collective *nous* becoming conscious of the identity of the oppressor,

they disperse the negative elements of the landscape in favour of a regenerated earth:

Que les corbeaux  
S'enfuient de peur à notre approche,  
C'est leur droit: Nous pouvons aller.

De l'espoir il y en aura  
Sur les rameaux.

Et puis nous ne sommes pas  
De la terre.

L'ennemi,  
Nous le connaissons. (G, 133)

Similarly, in "Soleil", the sun is described as a dynamic and progressive force. It is a wheel turning "in favour of" summer, against, it is implied, the forces of decline:

C'est la roue au soleil.  
Du jour et du soleil

Exerçant les vallées  
En faveur de l'été. (G, 261)

Like the dialectic producing qualitative changes, the sun is continually superseding states:

Excédant les poussières,  
Dépassant les rosées. (G, 261)

If the sun is a progressive force, it demands adherence by humanity. The speaker suggests that the reader should see the link between the sun and progress:

Si l'on voyait un peu  
Comme ensemble se tiennent  
Avenir et soleil. (G, 263)

The message is made explicit by the use of political symbol:

Si l'on voyait un peu  
La fille de campagne  
Qui monte en robe rouge un raidillon de terre.  
(G, 263)

This figure is a working-class Marianne, dressed in the revolutionary colour, indicating the difficult path to progress. In the final lines, Guillevic joins together sunlit landscape and revolution:

Voyez la fille, gardez le rouge de sa robe,  
 Voyez le sol chauffé à sec du raidillon,  
 Soyez soleil. (G, 264)

Nature has therefore ceased to be separate or hostile in relation to man, and, instead, has become an accomplice, full of ciphers anticipating Utopia.

## 2) *The Victory of Man*

In the previous section, a major theme was the separation of man from nature. Things were foreign and hostile; man was guilty of crimes against things, and was to find redemption in gestures of affection towards them. The dominant view was that man was inferior to things.

In this period, however, Guillevic's conversion to scientific socialism expresses itself in the emphasis placed on the powers of humanity. If with the socialist pathetic fallacy, there is complicity between man and nature, the former plays the decisive role. Firstly, man is described as taming chaos; and secondly, in references to early poems, previously frightening things are domesticated.

The power of man to order the world is celebrated in "L'homme". Man, small in stature, is looked down upon by the surrounding rocks and forests, but his voice puts an end to this:

Mais tu parles  
 Et ta voix est telle  
 Que les rochers se taisent  
 (...)  
 Ta voix n'a pas d'égale. (G, 93-94)

The reason for man's superiority is his intelligence, his ability to work and create things:

Tu travailles les choses. Tu fabriques

Et tu sais ce que tu veux. Tu le fais  
 Sous le regard des grands bois et des rochers,  
 Sous le coup de ciel. (G, 94)

So, when chaos reigns in the world, it is this *homo faber*  
 who appears to restore order:

Quand tombent les rocs et les eaux,  
 Quand le volcan répond au ciel,  
 Quand les oiseaux sont dans le feu,

C'est toi qui apparais,  
 C'est toi qui sais et qui commandes. (G, 94)

The change in Guillevis's view of man's relation to nature is expressed in references to poems of the previous period. In "Mes prairies, mes étangs", what were sources of fear--the open expanse in "C'est peut-être au-dessus" and the erupting pond in "Ce soir encore l'étang" (T, 17 & 92)--are now met with self-confidence:

Nous aurons plus de joie  
 Et sûrement moins peur

De vous aussi,  
 Mes noirs étangs, mes noires prairies. (G, 99)

In "Naguère", two references to early poems can be found in the opening lines:

C'est une armoire  
 Qui s'est ouverte.

Il en sort un chat qui a bien du sang  
 Là où sont les yeux et qui vous demande  
 D'y mettre le doigt. (TB, 52)

The first two lines refer to the closed wardrobe in the opening poem of *Terraqué* (T, 17), the next group to the man gouging out the cat's eyes in another (T, 92). Together, the wardrobe, which contained either "pain" or "mort", is opened to reveal the horror of man's crime against nature, demanding the healing of the cat's wounds. However, at the end of the poem, the speaker brusquely consigns this

nightmare to the past, reducing the wardrobe to harmless domesticity:

—Rien de cela  
N'est plus à craindre. C'est fini.

C'est une armoire avec du linge et de la place  
Pour en mettre encore. (TB, 52)

The new status of things after the triumph of man is illustrated by "Leçon de choses" (G, 91-92). In this poem, the thing that is the focus of the poem is human blood. With this, the thing becomes the occasion for a political lesson: it may be blood spilt by capitalist exploitation or by fighting for freedom in the Communist struggle.

The victory of man and the politicisation of things in the "socialist pathetic fallacy" leads to a shift towards exclusively human subject-matter, reacting to political circumstance.

### 3) *Collective Consciousness*

Two aspects of Marxism are the stripping away of "false consciousness" to attain objective knowledge; and the identification of the self with a grand historical design. The emergence of political consciousness is also the emergence of collective consciousness. In Guillevic's poetry there are themes of revelation, historical destiny and anti-individualism.

The importance of unveiling the truth is succinctly described in "Voir":

Il s'agit de voir  
Tellement plus clair,

De faire avec les choses  
Comme la lumière. (G, 105)

The notion of revelation is echoed in "On va vous dire". By adhering to the collective, reality is penetrated:

C'est quand on était  
Avec les hommes  
(...)  
Que ça s'est ouvert  
Et qu'on est entré. (G, 137)

The theme of historical destiny is expressed in "Histoire". At the beginning of the poem, *nous* lack a definite sense of identity:

Nous n'avons pas été posés,  
Un jour, bien habillés, sur des tertres choisis.  
(G, 158)

Life is instead a struggle towards consciousness of their real enemy:

Il a fallu se battre pour commencer,  
Avant de savoir contre qui se battre. (G, 159)

At the end of the poem, the arrival of a new race of politically-conscious people is announced, with knowledge that will be translated into future triumph:

Nous avons grandi  
Et reçu des coups.

Nous avons appris  
A savoir de qui

Et ce jour encore,  
Nous en porterons. (G, 159)

In this period, any doubts about the individual's relations with others have disappeared, giving way to the celebration of commitment to the grand design. In "En 1948", the hardship of that year is overwhelmingly compensated for by collective action:

Hommes de plus tard,  
Hommes des clairières à n'en plus finir,  
En 1948, croyez-nous,  
(...)  
Il était déjà très bien  
D'être un homme qui se donne  
A ce qu'il sait. (EV, 25)

Such happy immersion in the dynamic real world is contrasted with individualism. In "A la fin du compte", individual existence is compared to being in a funnel, whose sloping sides draw the solitary figure further and further away from reality. It brings about the opposite of collective knowledge:

C'était bien ça, pourtant, la solitude:  
Un entonnoir où tu étais.

Peut-être, après tout,  
Es-tu descendu, descendu longtemps,  
Plus que tu ne sais.

Mais c'était encore  
Et toujours pareil,

Cet entonnoir qui ne va pas  
Vers les choses qui sont à voir. (TB, 52)

In Guillevic's early poems, there is often a sense of exclusion, offset by nostalgia for unity with the earth. In this period, the belief that one is alone is considered selfish and illusory. Active comprehension of the world only comes about through the sacrifice of the individual to the political movement.

#### 4) *Struggles*

Many of the poems in this period react explicitly to historical circumstance, running the gamut of the Party's concerns. The main themes are the struggle for peace; defence of Stalin's USSR; and the class struggle.

Firstly, there is the struggle for peace. In "Exposé", the speaker sends thanks to the peace movement:

Je remercie tous ceux qui luttent sur la terre  
A l'exemple des morts très grands,  
Tous ceux sans qui la guerre égraineraient la terre  
Et les maisons, les hommes. (TB, 15)



Guillevic attacks rearmament, and especially the threat of nuclear war, in "Quelles images" (EV, 15) and "Une autre guerre" (G, 185). Several wars of intervention are specifically responded to. In "La Grèce", Greece is described as "une terre fragmentée/Tournée vers la mer et la liberté" (G, 174). Freedom is, according to the poet, as natural to Greece as the sea and sun. Because of this, the poet concludes that despite the efforts of Churchill and others, "La Grèce est un pays qu'on ne peut asservir" (G, 175).

Another target for the poet's wrath is the UN intervention in Korea. In "Attente du printemps", the falling rain sparks off in the mind of the poet awareness of the suffering of Korean widows:

On aurait dit des yeux  
Des femmes de Corée qui ont tout vu  
De quoi pleurer, printemps, (TB, 71)

Similarly, in "Le Goût de la paix", contemplation of the peaceful landscape gives way to awareness of the horrors of war and the desire for vengeance:

Ce sont les pierres et les femmes, ce sont les hommes  
et le vent.  
Ce sont les choses de la terre et les peuples debout  
sur terre,

Petits enfants des Coréens  
Qui désignent les assassins. (TB, 79)

Related to this anti-war sentiment is Guillevic's opposition to colonialism. In "La Banque" (G, 193), the announcement of the reprivatization of the Bank of Indo-China is interpreted as the State abetting colonial exploitation:

(...) l'Etat la salue et la laisse aux mains blanches  
Des capitaux privés.

Such economic interests are linked to the war-drive. Guillevic ends the poem by describing as derisory the upward curve of profits beside that of the victims of colonialism.

Related to anti-war sentiment, too, is anti-Americanism. The USA was considered by the PCF as an oppressive, expansionary force in the world. When challenged to confront the troubles in Eastern Europe, Communists turned their fire on what they saw as the lack of freedom in the States. Because of this virulent anti-Americanism, at the height of the Cold War, several French Communists were refused entry into the country. This is the occasion for Guillevic's poem, "En Amérique" (G, 172-3). The poem takes the form of a dialogue in which the second voice repeats "Tu n'iras pas/En Amérique". The first voice wants to visit the USA to bring solidarity to the blacks fighting for freedom. But it is precisely this that the American authorities want to prevent:

--Je suis avec eux, je suis avec ceux  
Qui n'acceptent pas

--C'est bien pour cela  
Que tu n'iras pas. (G, 173)

Conversely, Stalin's USSR is portrayed by Guillevic as the beacon of freedom. In "Je lui dirai", the convert is confident to say that the free life has arrived in the Soviet Union:

Je lui dirai  
Que l'URSS est là, plus forte que l'orage,  
Je lui dirai de ces forêts nouvelles  
Qui vont là-bas se voir avoir affaire avec le vent.

Je lui dirai  
Que chacun fait là-bas de son travail heureux  
Un fruit qui contribue à mûrir sous ses yeux. (TB, 58)

Such strong identification with the Communist East reaches its heights with the poem "Au camarade Staline". If Stalin

could see, Guillevic begins, what is happening in France, he would see how a curse has descended on everyday life:

Tu verrais le poids qui est sur les choses,  
Tu verrais que le malaise est entré partout.  
C'est une espèce  
De pourriture de l'air qui a trouvé  
A fouillir dans le moindre objet. (PD, 164)

To this malaise is opposed the building of the millenarian dream in the Soviet Union. There, the fact that the people have taken destiny into their own hands means that the material world flourishes:

La terre, les bêtes, les choses, les hommes  
Font comme une rose qui tourne  
Dans la musique pareille à celle qu'entend la rose  
Quand elle se voit s'ouvrir. (PD, 166)

This success is due to none other than the leadership of "le génial Staline":

Parce que tu es là, depuis le début,  
Et toujours tu sais  
Ce qui va venir, ce qu'il faut faire  
En ce moment qui n'attend pas.

Parce que ta bonté non plus, mon camarade,  
Tu ne l'as pas gardée pour toi. (PD, 166)

In France, the Utopian promise of Stalinist Russia has inspired the Communist movement. In their millions, the French struggle for the final destruction of capitalism. This goes alongside the defence of the USSR against capitalist aggression. At the end of the poem, Guillevic anticipates the revolution promised by struggle and inspired by Stalin:

Regarde: bien souvent il y a sur les choses  
Le frisson de sourire  
Qui annonce la nouvelle époque aux horizons.

Pour gagner, nous avons  
Ton oeuvre et ton exemple. (PD, 167)

Finally, the class struggle is a frequent theme in this period. The prevailing atmosphere of violent strikes and

economic hardship is the occasion for vituperative attacks by Guillevic on the capitalist system.

In "La Misère", poverty is conveyed in both material and figurative ways. Poverty is deadly--"aux doigts de rasoir" (G, 165)--, linked to police oppression--the rubber of their truncheons--and to false consciousness--"brouillard". Materially, it means privation of everyday utensils and food. But the worst poverty of all, Guillevic argues, is apathy: "Je ne sais plus, je ne veux plus, je ne peux plus" (G, 166). The poem ends with the collective promise to overthrow the ruling class:

Nous voici dans les grands combats  
Où les maîtres seront par terre  
Et la misère traversée. (G, 166)

The assertiveness of the proletariat is expressed in "Grèves". In common struggle, the rebels grow in stature, gird their loins in the face of the threat of police violence, "la matraque", and devote themselves to future liberation. The three verses are punctuated by the optimistic "Bientôt victoire" (G, 169). In the final section of "Après", the lost children of the mines are brought to a *prise de conscience* by their desire for sunlight, and struggle for a fraternal utopia:

(...) attirer le jour  
Où les yeux de leurs frères  
  
Seront profonds de joie  
Comme de bleu la gentiane. (G, 51)

Such utopianism, finally, is the theme of "Le Premier jour" (G, 188). A new Eden is promised, emblematised by a tree transfigured by morning light. Domination is at an end--"les maîtres sont jetés"--alienation is ended--"le peuple se verra seul dans la lumière/Avec lui-même". The future

atmosphere is that of the *fête*: "le peuple atteindra ses rues (...) fera ses joies."

### 5) *Artistic Commitment*

In the previous period, language was both problematic and a means of resistance. Language became an antidote to chaos and war, but had not yet achieved the warrior status of the committed. In this period, involvement in the Communist struggle leads Guillevic to link language to political utility. There is art's commitment to the struggle and the denial of the subjective.

The commitment of art to the struggle is described in the opening poem of *Gagner*, "Filets". Guillevic addresses the tools of his artistic trade, "le verre,/Le pot de terre et le papier" (G, 13). These tools decipher the universe, allowing its possession:

Nous le savons:  
Tout vous fait signe et puis se rend. (G, 18)

This artistic practice performs an ordering function, gathering together the real:

C'est bien d'être au milieu.  
C'est bien de ramasser. (G, 19)

As far as this goes, there is no progression from the previous period: artist's tools are like the "fil de fer" which created forms "où pouvoir s'agripper"; and the pleasure of being "au milieu" seems individualistic. But the change in Guillevic's attitude to art appears, at the end of the poem, when political utility enters the scene: the *vous* of the tools must be related to the self-liberation of *nous*:

Oui, c'est vous qui menez.

Mais nous avons à dire,  
Nous avons à gagner. (G, 24)

This entry of politics causes a decisive decentring of the artist. In the final poem of *Gagner*, "Art poétique", Guillevic strips his individuality of any significance:

Je ne parle pas pour moi,  
Je ne parle pas en mon nom,  
Ce n'est pas de moi qu'il s'agit.

Je ne suis rien  
Qu'un peu de vie, beaucoup d'orgueil. (G, 271)

The poet has become aware of forces that go beyond his personal will. Around him is a collective utopian impulse:

Je sais que tout a volonté, autour de moi,  
D'aller plus loin, de vivre plus,  
De mieux mourir aussi longtemps  
Qu'il fait mourir. (G, 271)

As a result, the individual voice gives way to the self-expression of a historical movement:

Ne croyez pas entendre en vous  
Les mots, la voix de Guillevic.

C'est la voix du présent allant vers l'avenir  
Qui vient de lui sous votre peau. (G, 272)

Years of poetry's struggle for independence come to an end as Guillevic, anticipating the *Poésie nationale* episode, announces the abolition of his individuality.

### *Conclusion*

The poetry of this period expresses the themes of modern Communism: historical inevitability; the triumph of rational man; the theory of "two camps"; the class struggle and the unquestioning adherence of the individual to the Party. In Guillevic's life and work, this is the height of Guillevic's optimism and humanism.

## 2.4) FORM

### *Introduction*

In the previous period, the form of Guillevic's poems expressed an uneven world-view: the structure of negation to convey pessimism; open structure to convey uncertainty; and future-oriented poems to express optimism. In this period, most of Guillevic's poems reflect his adherence to the Communist cause. Five main features will be described in this chapter: future-oriented structure; discursive style; formal patterns of persuasion; processes of identification and division; and finally, formal discontinuities, both between poems and within poems. In my conclusion, I will explain how the form of these poems shows Guillevic's involvement in modern politics, and a contradictory cultural position.

#### *1) Future-oriented Structure*

It is the future-oriented structure which becomes dominant during this period. Its optimism is in direct contrast with the structure of negation of the previous period. There is not a series of reversals, but rather, a confident unfolding.

In "Soleil", this progressive structure unfolds through five stages: the contentment of the natural scene; the link between sun, *homo faber* and political consciousness; the political implications of the sun's dynamism; and finally, the exhortation to overthrow the ruling class.

The tone is simple and explanatory. Temporal clauses beginning "Quand" are followed by demonstratives and predicated subjects in a uniform and untroubled process of cause and effect:

Quand on fait les foins  
Le soleil s'adore (G, 260)

Quand le contentement  
(...)  
C'est le soleil qui nous le donne. (G, 259)

Hypothesis is followed by demonstration: "Si l'on voyait (... ) C'est par là".

Bound in this syntax of progression is the use of repetition. Repetition of phrases—"Quand on fait les foins", "C'est la roue au soleil"—convey the dynamic message. Prosody also conveys this, for example, the syllabic and phonetic resemblances of "Exerçant, Excédant, Dépassant, Exigeant" (G, 261).

Together, these formal devices provide a good example of "socialist realist" poetry. A traditional *topos*, man and nature, meets political awareness, which in turn ends on the opening out onto political action outside the institution of literature.

A similar process takes place in the final part of "Après" (in the new edition of *Gagner*, it is a separate poem, "Les mineurs"). The miners begin this section/poem in the dark, circumscribed by negatives: "Ils ne voient pas souvent", "Ils n'ont pas l'horizon". Pivotal in the narrative are the lines "Mais un soleil/Est un soleil" (G, 50), whose prosodic difference throws them into relief. From this moment of revelation, non-action leads to action, present to future. The miners have clarity of mind—"ils savent que (...) c'est"—the poem ending on the future



tense; "Seront profonds de joie/Comme de bleu la gentiane"  
(G, 51).

## 2) Discursiveness

A variation of the discourse of promise described above is the use of argument. Guillevic sets up a discursive situation where danger can be mentioned then neutralised.

Such is the case in "Eglogue", which takes the form of an address by *je* to *toi*, anticipating an erotic union which will also be a union with nature. The poem begins with promise:

(...) j'irai si tu viens ajuster à mon corps  
Ce corps que tu possèdes. (TB, 41)

The hypothetical *si* is important: there may be conditions which deny this union. The speaker expands on this:

Contre quoi que ce soit  
Je n'ai pas d'assurance  
Et de gages mes mains sont vides. (TB, 44)

Further on, he puts together positive and negative:

Tu n'empêcheras pas, peut-être  
La taupe de creuser des couloirs dans tes heures.

Mais tu auras souri, ton corps le sait. (TB, 45)

At the end of the poem, the negative elements are completely replaced by the coming happiness:

Tu vas venir, tu viens  
Et c'est autour de nos corps  
Notre complice. (TB, 47)

Thus, a poetry that is committed to a movement without power and whose future is uncertain is led to use concessions in argument. But concessions to uncertainty are inevitably replaced by the over-riding belief in a better future.

### 3) Formal Patterns of Persuasion

According to Kenneth Burke, in *The Rhetoric of Motives*, persuasion involves choice, will; it is directed to man only insofar as he is free. Aiming to induce from the addressee an act or attitude, persuasion has a competitive stress. A man will only be persuaded insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his. Such persuasion may be effected by many purely formal patterns---e.g. a set of oppositions, climax, cumulative form--which can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. The audience may be induced to participate in the form as a "universal locus of appeal" (1).

The use of form to "induce collaborative expectancy" can be found in Guillevic's poems of this period. Cumulative form, climax and oppositions are used to convey his Communist message as irresistibly logical.

In "La misère", cumulative structure ends by throwing into relief his message. The poem is given structure by the repetition of "misère", first wistfully repeated in the opening line, then spread down the text. The style is argumentative and explanatory: "la misère, c'est quand". This cumulation ends with the description of the ultimate misery:

Mais le total de la misère,  
(...)  
C'est quand on dit: tout m'est égal. (G, 166)

Similarly, in "Ils chantent", the cumulative repetition of "C'est naturel" throws into relief, at the end of the poem, its negative: "C'est leur misère/Qui ne l'est pas" (G, 179).

This becomes very mechanical. As I described in the previous chapter, in "En Amérique", the repetition of "Tu n'iras pas/En Amérique" culminates in the explanation of non-entry into the United States. Similarly, in "De cinq à un", a countdown from five to one expresses the logic of the movement from division to unity:

Cinq--  
Comme quatre et un  
(...)  
Un--  
Comme le bonheur. (TB, 70-71)

Finally, repetition is frequently used by the poet to reinforce his message. For example, in "Une autre guerre":

Bauxite, wolfram, tungstène  
Pour la guerre.  
(...)  
Avions, camions, chars d'assaut, conscription  
Pour la guerre. (G, 185)

Such repetition performs the function of ordering diverse elements. But it also performs the function of conveying the truth of the logic of war underlying the use of such elements.

#### *4) Identification and Division*

In rhetoric there is a process of identification and division. The orator attracts the sympathy of the audience, and at the same time distances himself from imaginary opponents. A identifies with B, but such identification implies division: we are this because we are not that. This

process is a major feature of Guillevic's poetry in this period.

There is bitter invective against the class enemy in "Une autre guerre":

Vous n'avez pas faim  
Vous n'avez envie  
De presque rien.

Vous n'avez besoin  
Que de plus de pouvoir  
Pour durer. (G, 184)

Implicit in this attack on the bourgeoisie is the condition of the working class. The division gives way to identification with the revolutionary class:

Vous savez que les fleurs, partout  
Sont pour ceux qui travaillent. (G, 184)

Here there is a simple structure of confrontation: the imaginary ruling-class addressee and the implied audience of the working class.

This clear structure is repeated in "Le Premier jour", with its oppositions "le peuple/les maîtres, l'étouffoir/la lumière". There is not simply use of oppositions in these poems, but also the use of generalities to express social conflict. The commitment of Guillevic as *poète-militant* leads him to refuse the *je* that is traditional of lyric poetry in favour of a collective pronoun that speaks for his class. For instance, in "Banderoles":

Nous ne sommes pas des hommes  
A ne savoir que faire

Car nous avons à conquérir. (G, 106)

Another method of identification is the use of metaphor and symbol. In "Les Trusts", metaphors of tentacles and cannibalistic spiders are used to dehumanise the capitalist enemy. On the positive side, in "Soleil", the peasant

Marianne dressed red is used as a symbol of the revolutionary movement. In case this should be innocently read as an erotic image, Guillevic explains the link between poet and collective by exhorting *vous* to bear in mind the redness of her dress--in other words, to adhere to the struggle.

### 5) Discontinuities

Not all the poems in this period strictly follow the formal features outlined above; nor are the poems themselves coherent in form.

Firstly, a notable exception to the "discourse of promise" is "L'Homme qui se ferme". Certainly, the poem has a message hostile to individualism, but it does not follow a visionary narrative, lacks peroration and final future tenses. Instead, like most of Guillevic's poems of the next period, the poem is made up of a discontinuous series of micro-texts. Each micro-text is problematic, pursuing and interrogating something, eg "Il veut se coucher (...) Mais avec quoi?" (G, 217). There are oppositions unresolved: "Les yeux fermés/Les yeux ouverts" (G, 223), while questions remain unanswered: "Qu'est-ce que c'est/Etre sur la terre?" (G, 220). Modal adverbs and adversative conjunctive links--"*mais*", "*à ce qu'il semble*", "*pourtant*"--halt or problematise the flow of the poem. And what the individual could be is only suggested by negatives: "Il ne s'enfuit pas (...) Il ne s'arrache pas" (G, 218). If this form does not radically alter Guillevic's world-view, it expresses a different tone: openness to an uncertain world.

Formal discontinuities exist within the poems as well as between them. There is coexistence of everyday language and traditional form.

Firstly, on the level of prosody, the traditional form which will find its purest expression in *Poésie nationale* in Part B is anticipated. In the third section of "Soleil" can be found a series of split alexandrines and pseudo-rhymes of [e] and [j]:

C'est la roue au soleil  
Du jour et du soleil  
  
Exerçant les vallées  
En faveur de l'été. (G, 261)

In "Le premier jour", there are octosyllabic lines belonging to the popular song tradition: "Quand l'étouffoir sera tombé/Quand les maîtres seront jetés". These exist alongside alexandrines, eg "L'arbre que trouvera la lumière au matin". Similarly, "Grèves" is a marching song with octosyllables and the chorus-like repetition of "Bientôt victoire" (G, 169).

There are discontinuities of register in some poems. In "La misère", there is coexistence of figurative language traditional to poetry, and everyday speech. In the second and third lines, regular prosody coincides with figuration:

La misère aux doigts de rasoir.  
Aux doigts de caoutchouc aussi et de brouillard.  
(G, 165)

Following these lines, the language becomes argumentative and colloquial: "La misère, c'est quand (...) Puisque (...) Mais". The use of equivalence becomes the form for the most everyday content: "Pour le café, pour la vaisselle, pour les pommes de terre" (G, 165).

There is a similar coexistence of linguistic "realism" and poetic figuration in "Au camarade Staline":

Alors, je ne sais pas comment te dire,  
La terre, les bêtes, les choses, les hommes  
Font comme une rose qui tourne  
Dans la musique pareille à celle qu'entend la rose  
Quand elle se voit s'ouvrir. (PD, 166)

Thus the linguistic realism of the hesitating, yet familiar address of one comrade to another in the first line, gives way to the extended simile and traditional poetic image of the rose.

### *Conclusion*

Two general points can be drawn from the formal features of these poems: Guillevic's adherence to modern politics, and his contradictory attitude towards poetry.

Firstly, these poems provide an example of the movement of poetry towards the wider discourse of political modernity. Political modernity can be characterised as follows: mass organisations in struggle; causes demanding absolute adherence; hierarchical structures. The rhetoric of political modernity is found in the paper, the tract and the political meeting. In each of these forms of utterance, the party centre galvanises the faithful against the enemy.

Such style of strife is found in Guillevic's poems: structures of confrontation, words spoken in the name of the collective, political symbol, repetition, exaggeration, invective and command. It is correct to say that Guillevic's poetry moves towards political *discours*.

Secondly, the formal discontinuities point to a contradictory attitude towards poetry. Traces of popular

song and traditional alexandrines, poetic and everyday language registers, correspond to a split orientation: rejection of modernism in favour of traditional lyrical form; rejection of elitist poetry in favour of popular culture. Guillevic is combining what is familiar and unfamiliar to poetry in his attempt to produce a committed art.

#### *Reference*

- 1) Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Los Angeles, 1969)



PART B--*Poésie nationale* 1953-1955

## 2.5) BIOGRAPHY 1953-1955

After the publication of *Terre à bonheur*, Guillevic suffered from an artistic malaise. A gap had emerged between political commitment and artistic creation: while Guillevic identified strongly with the collective, he had lost contact with the vitality of language. The solution was to adopt regular form in his poetry. Guillevic rallied to *Poésie nationale* for political and artistic reasons.

Firstly, regular form brought him into contact with the collective:

C'était un signe de ralliement, voire de soumission à la collectivité puisque par le vers régulier, je retrouvais ce que l'on m'avait enseigné à l'école primaire d'abord, au collège ensuite. (VP, 149-150)

Attracted towards what was most classical and constrained, this rallying to the collective was at the same time a means of concentrating himself:

Le sonnet a quelque chose dans sa forme, ses rimes embrassées, etc., qui convient au narcissisme. On s'y enferme, on s'y rencoquille. (VP, 150)

The first result to this neo-classicism was a decasyllabic, regularly rhyming poem called "Saint-Pierre-des-Vers", written to illustrate a painting by Orazi. This was published alongside an article by Aragon in *Les Lettres Françaises* of the 2nd December, 1953. Aragon greeted the poem as a conversion to the new movement of national poetry, which aimed for the "liquidation de l'individualisme formel en poésie". Guillevic followed up this by writing sonnets,

firstly in *LLF* then collected as *Trente et un sonnets* and  
*l'Age mûr*.

## 2.6) HISTORY

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I will describe the PCF's attitude to nationalism during this period, and the phenomenon of *Poésie nationale* in particular.

#### 1) *The PCF and Nationalism*

Two features of the PCF's attitude to nationalism can be identified: a move from internationalism to the theory of a national form of socialism, and the emergence, during this period, of violent anti-Americanism.

According to Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, the working class has no homeland. Such a call for the unity of workers across national divides was the rallying cry for the Left before the outbreak of the First World War. After the Armistice, Leninists benefited from war fatigue by denigrating patriotism: the Bolshevik revolution would be a transnational one.

But with the arrival in power of Stalin, the Communist attitude to the national question changed. Foreign intervention and the failure of worldwide revolution justified the continual existence of the state and the consolidation of national boundaries. Stalin theorised the nation as a totality, rather than as a mystification of class interests:

A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture. (1)

Stalin was not denying the existence of the class struggle, but was trying to close the gap between national and proletarian cultures. This is shown in his discussion of linguistics. Asked if language is part of the ideological superstructure determined by the economic base, Stalin replies negatively:

La langue n'est pas engendrée par telle ou telle base vieille ou nouvelle au sein de la société donnée, mais par toute la marche de l'histoire de la société et de l'histoire des bases au cours des siècles. Elle n'est pas l'œuvre d'une classe quelconque, mais de toute la société, de toutes les classes de la société. (2)

Here Stalin is attacking the Soviet linguist, N. Marr, for whom language represented class interests. He is emphasising that language, as a means of communication, has always been and remains a unique language for that society and its members. The emphasis is not on the upheavals of revolutionary activity, but rather on the uninterrupted transformation of language, proceeding by enrichment rather than abolition. Hence a revolutionary culture may be created which respects the national heritage, national in form, socialist in content:

Est-ce que nos camarades ignoreraient la formule bien connue des marxistes, suivant laquelle les cultures actuelles russe, ukrainienne, biélorusse et autres sont socialistes par le contenu et nationales par la forme, c'est-à-dire par la langue? (3)

Such a change in the line on the national question affected the PCF. During the 1920s and early 1930s the Party was resolutely against the *patrie*, some of its leading members, for example Jacques Doriot, involved in spectacular protests against colonialism. But from the mid-1930s this changed. The Franco-Soviet pact of 1935 encouraged identification with both countries, and the involvement of the PCF in the Resistance caused a coincidence of national

and socialist interests. The appropriation of the nation's colours for political ends is illustrated by the Communist slogan for the 1951 elections: "Républicain, Résistant, Union anti-fasciste pour l'indépendance nationale, Pain, Paix et Liberté."

This was a significant shift from portraying the red flag as the flag of all the workers. Victor Leduc bridged this gap, declaring Stalin more correct than Marx and Engels on the national question. A new patriotism was conceived: defence of the USSR, defence of French culture against American influence. The enemy, Cogniot declared, was cosmopolitanism: "Cosmopolitanism which wishes to Americanize the world, is nothing other than the most aggressive expression of bourgeois nationalism." (4)

The Communists assumed the role of guardians of the French way of life and of the heritage of the Enlightenment. Cogniot said at the 1945 Party Congress: "Communist intellectuals, we continue France and civilisation." (5) "Americanisation" was the problem. Louis Aragon attacked the rise of American values, giving as an example the growing influence of William Faulkner, while the likes of Elsa Triolet and Laurent Casanova opposed the spread of Americanised books, films and cartoons, as well as the commercialisation of the press. And intellectuals of the PCF were among the voices complaining about the "imposition" of the English language, the new "esperanto".

## 2) *Poésie nationale*

I will begin this description of *Poésie nationale* by briefly summarising the itinerary of Louis Aragon, the driving force behind this short-lived movement. I will then describe the development of this phenomenon as it is traced in Louis Aragon's articles in *Les Lettres Françaises*, collected in *Journal pour une Poésie nationale*, and end with a summary of the polemical exchange between Aragon and Tortel.

To understand the phenomenon of *Poésie nationale*, it is necessary to trace the development of Louis Aragon. It is he who conceives of the idea through his long battles for "realism" against "individualism". Aragon makes the appeal for a return to traditional forms, and it is his prestige which assured its success, however short-lived.

In the first stage of his poetic career, Aragon moved from Dadaism to the PCF, from absolute refusal to engagement in the "real world". The years 1914-1918 had destroyed all ideological hegemony and were a cause of the search for new world-views. Dadaism was a symptom of this, a revolt against morality, literature and daily life. Adhering to Dada, Aragon practised an uncommitted poetics, with word-play and rhyme-schemes that negated meaning. After the destructive playfulness of Dada, Aragon moved to Surrealism. For the Surrealists, following in the path of Romantics and Symbolists, the *rêve* was the higher reality which must be liberated and returned to the real.

But the surreal presented Aragon and his colleagues with a dilemma: does it imply revolutionary action or non-conformism? Initially, they took the former route. In 1925, Aragon argued that the writer is not absolutely free and is linked to objective, historically determined conditions.

Anti-colonialism brought the Surrealists close to the PCF and in 1927, Aragon and Breton joined the Party.

But the problem was posed of the relationship between the individual work and the masses. Breton left, rebelling against Party "commands", while Aragon attempted to combine Surrealism with the realm of commitment. The result was the appearance of *Front rouge* in 1934, which was violently denounced by Breton.

Having reached the "real world" of politics, Aragon was met by another challenge, that of the national question. In novels like *Les Cloches de Bâle*, Aragon had linked his art to the "objectivity" of class struggle, but he realised that events could only be real if they carried in them the history of the people. After the virulent anti-patriotism of his Dadaist and Surrealist phase, a rediscovery of nationalism took place:

Jusqu'au nom de mon pays pour moi était à ce point sali que je n'employais qu'en mauvaise part le mot de français. Nous leur abandonnions notre drapeau, notre histoire. Nous les aidions par notre ardeur à nous dépouiller. (6)

Aragon therefore sought a progressive link between the proletariat and the nation. Socialist realism was linked to nationalism in order to show the growing role of the working class in the construction of France's future. Knowledge of France and the movement of her history became essential. The nation was hero:

L'unité de la France ainsi débute par les poètes. Mais c'est que les poètes ont découvert le héros de la nouvelle épopée. Et c'est le peuple de la France. (7)

With the onset of war, the desire for a poetry of the real world and the creation of a national poetry went hand in hand. The disembodied unconscious of Surrealism became an

unconscious haunted by the past of a people, the individual expressing the nation:

comme le sanglot organique et profond de la France,  
comme ce parler de toute la terre et toute l'histoire,  
dont chaque poète est l'héritier, l'interprète trop  
souvent ignorant de ce qu'il fait. (8)

In order to create a more patriotic *poésie de circonstance*, Aragon rediscovered and re-evaluated the French poetic tradition. The old epics were particularly relevant:

A fréquenter Cligès, Yvain, Lancelot, Perceval ou  
Tristan, il me semble bien moins m'écarter de mon temps  
(...) qu'à lire les ouvrages d'André Gide, de Drieu La  
Rochelle ou de Jean Giono. (9)

The people became the new knight in shining armour. Across time, echoes of resistance were heard: from Roncevaux to Valmy, from the Communards to the Francs-tireurs. Hugo's *Les Châtiments* became an inspiration of literary resistance to Hitler and Vichy. Aragon's poems of the Resistance period invoked national traditions, people like the troubadours and events like the Crusades, while octosyllables and alexandrines provided form although cleverly modified.

Such a linking of the "real world" and the "nation" led to a hardening of Aragon's long opposition to individualism. The return to traditional form reacted against modernism. His poetics

ne peut être que la négation de l'individualisme formel  
(...), de la prétention pour chaque poète de se créer  
une forme propre rejetant l'expérience des autres  
poètes, la négation de ce culte moderne de  
l'originalité à tout prix nécessaire pour être classé  
poète (...) Cette reconstruction de notre vers  
traditionnel sert de tous points de vue la cause du  
réalisme en poésie; elle est l'expression même du  
sentiment national menacé par l'individualisme et la  
dénaturalisation de la culture. (10)

The end of the war brought a return to formal innovation and an abandonment of circumstance. Benjamin Péret attacked



the whole episode of Resistance poetry in *Le Déshonneur des poètes*. But in the early 1950s, in the context of the Cold war, Aragon attempted to revive the spirit of the Resistance.

The call for a national poetry returned in an article published in *Les Lettres Françaises*, on the 18th November 1953, entitled "Paul Eluard, ou le Triomphe de la Vie". For Aragon, Eluard had reacted to death by affirming collective struggle and rejecting individualism. Between the death of his wife Nusch and the appearance of *Poèmes politiques* in 1948, Eluard had published poems signed "Didier Desroches" which were in regular verse. Such a choice accorded with Aragon's ideal: "l'usage du nom Didier Desroches était une tentative de liquidation de l'individualisme formel en poésie" (11).

Eluard was inspired by Isidore Ducasse. Two quotations from this writer indicated the future: "La poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique"; "La poésie personnelle a fait son temps de jongleries relatives et de contorsions contingentes (...) La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un." Such a collective and committed art was exemplified by Eluard's octosyllabic poem on Greece in 1949 and by the posthumously published "Poésie ininterrompue II", a vision of life in 12/6 syllables. The example of Eluard is described thus: "Paul a totalement échappé aux mirages de la mort. Il nous est rendu. Il est rendu aux hommes (...) A son Parti. Le Parti du bien et de la lumière." (12)

On the 2nd December 1953, appeared the manifesto for national poetry, an article entitled "D'une Poésie Nationale". The occasion for it was a poem by Guillevic

entitled "Saint-Pierre-des-vers". For Aragon, this poem in regular verse followed the anti-individualist trend of Eluard:

Si l'on songe à la place singulière de Guillevic dans la poésie contemporaine, à la négation que sa poésie a toujours comportée du vers compté et rimé, au caractère entier de la position qui ne s'est jamais démentie de *Terraqué à Terre à bonheur*, de 1932 à 1952, cette démarche, sur l'exemple d'Eluard, qui est la sienne aujourd'hui, prend un grand sens, où il m'est impossible de ne pas lire l'accord qu'il me donne, qu'il donne à mon appréciation même de la démarche d'Eluard, considérée comme *une tentative de liquidation de l'individualisme formel en poésie*. (13)

Such a return to regular form asserted French identity while rejecting the modernist emphasis on formal autonomy and originality:

le vers traditionnel français comme une donnée essentielle de l'héritage de notre peuple, où s'exprime dans sa plénitude le caractère *national* de notre poésie, heurte vivement une tradition récente, vieille d'environ quatre-vingt ans, et qui se fonde sur les expériences des poètes, à partir d'Arthur Rimbaud, qui s'écartèrent du ronron régulier pour inventer en ce domaine un parler à eux. (14)

If this individualism had a positive side, dragging poetry out of mechanistic forms, modernist poetry now came across as something foreign:

ce ton, cette forme *dénationalisée*, donnait au contenu humain général un habit cosmopolite; et ces poètes, de plus en plus se trouvaient, montés sur les expériences d'autrui, perdre, *mais perdre vraiment*, sans la moindre place à la trouvaille, le lien charnel, vivant avec la nation, ce qui est le génie même de la langue prosodique, ce qui est par définition *intraduisible* dans une autre langue, et qui fait précisément par là la grandeur *nationale* d'une *poésie*. (15)

The literary world was witnessing a new phenomenon. Poets like Eluard, Guillevic, Pichette and Dobzynski were returning to regular verse, while a southern writer like Gaston Baissette returned to Occitan heptasyllables and octosyllables. These stylistic changes had a geo-political significance:

Il faut voir dans ces faits qui révèlent une même conscience dans des générations différentes à un même moment de l'histoire, une sorte de galvanisation de l'esprit national, qui exprime assurément, au-delà des leçons prises à l'heure de la Résistance contre les Nazis, le besoin des poètes, à l'heure du grand combat pour la paix, contre l'entreprise atlantique qui se base sur la renonciation à la souveraineté nationale, de rétablir le courant profond de l'esprit national, de donner à la conscience française son chant, sa voix, sa force de revendication. (16)

These changes also prefigured an end to the separation of self from class and nation: "en liquidant l'individualisme formel la poésie nouvelle entreprend aussi la liquidation de l'individualisme tout court." (17)

On a thematic level, this national poetry eschewed the naturalist grotesquerie of modernism, putting in its place homely, domestic values. Commenting on Henri Pichette's "Ode à la petite enfance", Aragon writes:

cette manière en guise d'art poétique d'Henri Pichette, qui apporte la même audace dans le thème que dans le vers, et sait n'avoir pas honte de chanter son enfant, son *renardeau*, comme les modes morales de la poésie individualiste, en vers blancs, non comptées, cosmopolites, l'interdisaient *mystérieusement* aux poètes d'hier. (18)

Many hundreds of people responded to Aragon's call, who published dozens of examples of national poetry in *Les Lettres Françaises*. The poems attempt to give contemporary committed content to traditional form and register. The political concerns of *Poésie nationale* are expressed by Paul Meier:

#### NOUS N'ACCEPTERONS PAS

De ce printemps hagard le temps est-il loin  
Où hurlaient les stukas sur les routes hurlantes  
Où roulaient le chaos des trahis de quarante  
Aux stalags fabuleux de l'ordre européen?

Le souvenir meurt-il de l'implacable faim  
Que les Nazis nouaient aux servitudes lentes  
Rêvant d'assassiner dans la honteuse attente

La fierté d'être un homme et l'horreur d'être un  
chien?

France humaine et présente aux captifs sans faiblesse  
Nous n'accepterons pas que te souille et te blesse  
L'insulte d'un passé gorgé de notre sang.

Nous n'accepterons pas la menace insensée  
Qu'étend sur notre amour et sur notre pensée  
Aux miradors de Bonn le monstre renaissant. (19)

Stylistically, there is an attempt to blend in old and new.  
Henri Pichette, in "Le Contre-feu", takes the allusive,  
polemical style of Victor Hugo and brings it up to date with  
references to the Cold War:

Lucian trois, Grégoire neuf, Innocent quatre,  
Et Robert dit le Bougre au bord de son barathre,  
Comme Zumaraga consumant les Codex,  
Vous, par Satan—qui rêve un Dieu mis à l'index—  
Vous, maîtres asservis, quel que soit votre empire,  
Sixte le faux boiteux, Ximénès le vampire,  
Ou Goebbels le Nazi, qui prîtes ce parti,  
Je dis: l'enfer, c'est vous. Et c'est toi, MacCarthy,  
De qui j'avais pu rire en un temps moins sévère. (20)

The most notable and controversial feature of *Poésie nationale* was the conversion of Guillevic to writing sonnets. Under the title, "L'Événement Guillevic", Aragon described thus the poet's itinerary:

L'événement de l'année naissante, en France, c'est assurément l'évolution qu'affirment les sonnets de Guillevic. Ce poète, déjà formé, qui avait place dans les anthologies, semblait à jamais astreint à la tradition récente du vers non compté, non rimé, à laquelle il avait ajouté par le dépouillement de l'expression; et voici que sa démarche rend public le sentiment, depuis assez longtemps le sien, d'une impasse poétique où ce jansénisme du chant le conduisait. Presque d'emblée, adoptant le vers rimé, rythmé, il pousse ce choix délibérée à ses conséquences logiques, et, avec une décision qui tient du manifeste, ne publie que des sonnets. (21)

To justify the sonnet form as a political weapon, Aragon describes its origins in the sixteenth century. Adopted by the sons of soldiers who fought in Italy, in an atmosphere of permanent war and ideological conflict, the sonnet could find a similar contemporary role:

qui m'interdirait de rêver qu'aux jours où nous sommes, à l'époque des révolutions et des guerres modernes, aux problèmes qui se posent à nous, dans le domaine poétique, le sonnet français peut encore donner ses étranges et neuves réponses, comme une machine à penser qu'il est? (22)

The formal and political advantages of the sonnet are also explored by Guillevic in an accompanying note:

Ce que je sais, c'est que cette forme m'a permis d'exprimer des choses que je n'étais pas arrivé à dire autrement, en particulier, mon pays natal et l'armée allemande; de retrouver en moi des sentiments enfouis profondément (voir le sonnet "L'Ecole publique"). Ce que je sais, c'est que je ne me sens pas gêné avec le vers régulier et la forme fixe. Je me sens au contraire porté par eux et ce qui m'inquiète plutôt, c'est mon aisance (je m'entends: non pas l'aisance mais cette grande possibilité), j'ai peur que ce soit de la facilité; enfin que la rime m'oblige souvent à approfondir, à préciser. J'en suis encore tout étonné. (23)

This thesis is further elaborated in Aragon's Preface to Guillevic's *Trente et un sonnets*. Just as German poets returned to traditional form in order to oppose Napoleonic hegemony, so the return to traditional form asserts French identity against the Cold Warriors:

aux jours où le S.H.A.P.E. met ses poteaux sur l'autoroute de l'Ouest, les pipe-lines allongent leurs tentacules, Orléans a été repris par les Américains qui y tiennent caserne, le problème est changé, il est celui de la poésie nationale. (24)

Aragon's thesis supporting Guillevic's sonnets met a lively response from Jean Tortel, whose correspondence with Guillevic was published in *Europe* (25). Tortel sought to demarcate the political and the poetic. If Guillevic's adoption of sonnet form was for aesthetic reasons, then it was justified, but Tortel believed it was being exploited for political ends. Pierre Daix, by praising the "precision" of language in Guillevic's sonnets, had conflated language with precision of political position.

Tortel then criticised the division that Aragon made between traditional and free verse. The free verse was relatively new, a tradition in the making that should not be rejected. Conversely, form should not be backward looking: the failure of French Romanticism could be attributed to its use of traditional verse form.

Finally, Tortel questioned the notion of realism in poetry. Does being linked to the real, Tortel asks, mean the real's reflection or its figuration? Tortel prefers the latter: the poet must continually delve into the unknown.

In a brief reply (26), Aragon made two points. Firstly, he was defending the existence of verse against poetry which was merely prose cut up into lines. Secondly, he was proposing a reconciliation of the personal and the national.

### *Conclusion*

The episode of *Poésie nationale* can be seen as the high-point of Zhdanovism in the French Communist Party. It is the most consistent rejection of modernism in poetry and individualism in general; and it is the last example of Party writers responding to the call of a cultural commissar, in this case, Aragon. But this phenomenon is short-lived. After the revelation of the crimes of Stalin, Aragon is reconciled with free verse and personal concerns, for example in *Le Fou d'Elsa*.

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- 21) *ibid.* 61
- 22) *ibid.* 66
- 23) *ibid.* 69-70
- 24) L.Aragon, "Préface", *Trente et un sonnets* (Paris, 1954), 29
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## 2.7) THEME

Four main themes can be found in Guillevic's sonnets: Communism; nationalism; domestic life; and references to the sonnet-form itself.

Firstly, the poet sings the praises of the Communist movement. As in the previous committed poems, nature is allegory of the progressive movement, individualism is attacked, and utopian hope expressed.

The first sonnet of *l'Age mûr*, for example, is a song of contentment which refers back without regret to a past of solitude. The speaker celebrates the reconciliation of subject and object which had caused so much anguish in Section One. The speaker is included in a nature infused with colour:

Je vois bien que je suis dans son immensité  
Entre le bleu du ciel et la terre à verdure. (AM, I)

Separation from things gives way to complicity with things:

Je ne jalouse plus les choses de la nature.

Playing on the word *droiture*, Guillevic draws together cultivation of the earth and the path of goodness:

Les blés sont avec moi pour la vie en droiture.

Inclusion in the collective and the adoption of its voice leads to knowledge of the world:

Je connais des milliers de choses. Cœur à cœur  
Avec les hommes je vois clair. Je vis d'ardeur  
Même en parlant de moi c'est leur chant que j'entonne.

Individualism is looked back upon as wasteful and joyless:

J'étais seul. J'ai perdu du temps, beaucoup de temps.  
(AM, III)

This commitment to the collective gives rise to hope of utopia. In the six poems in *Trente et un sonnets* entitled



"Aux hommes de plus tard", the speaker contrasts a present of alienation with a future of gratifying labour. If the present is marked by misery, the future is marked by the free development of human potential. The struggle for this future will be a difficult one, the speaker concludes, but victory is prefigured by revolutions in China and the Soviet Union.

These themes were found in the previous committed poems. What is different about the sonnets is the addition of the national dimension. Guillevic redefines "France" in a progressive way by drawing together national and proletarian cultures; and attacks NATO in the name of this French identity.

In "Images de la gloire" (TS, 64), Guillevic brings together national and proletarian cultures. The poem begins with the image of an ascending eagle. The virtual nature of this image is contrasted with the clear understanding of the real which follows. Witnessed is the sight of a revolutionary proletariat carrying out its historical role: "Les hommes dont la vie est d'être avec l'histoire". The speaker then connects explicitly with historical events: the *Front populaire* and the Liberation. Bringing his account up to date, Guillevic identifies within France a progressive force of unstoppable strength: "vivant plus vite que les vents".

The progressive tradition of France is also celebrated in "L'Ecole publique". Looking back at his childhood in Saint-Jean-Brévelay, the poverty of his school is compensated for by the Republican traditions that it teaches:

—Pourtant j'ai bien appris dans cette pauvre école:

Orthographe, calcul, histoire des Français,  
 Le quatorze juillet, Valmy, la Carmagnole,  
 Le progrès, ses reculs, et, toujours, son succès. (TS,  
 61)

France having thus been defined progressively, it is defended against the Cold Warriors. "Sonnet dans le goût ancien" relates a trip from Paris to Nancy. The enjoyment of the harmonious country scene is brutally interrupted by the US occupation:

Puis la voiture va vers le pays mouillé  
 Sur les hauteurs de Meuse, au seuil de la Lorraine.

C'est ici que tout change et la honte me prend.  
 Je vois partout camper l'armée américaine  
 Et c'est intolérable, France, et déchirant. (TS, 51)

In "Au pays natal" the landscape of the homeland protests against the rearmament of Germany:

(...) ils crient par tous les vents, par les corbeaux  
 en bandes,  
 Par les couleurs de leurs arbres, de leurs maisons,  
 Crient contre les maudits et leurs combinaisons  
 De remettre debout une armée allemande.

The assertion of French identity is therefore not the warlike rhetoric of nationalist doggerel found in the First World War. Instead, it is in the name of peace, against the arms race. The use of the countryside to express a political message is found again in "H" (TS, 69). Here, the contentment of the country scene is disturbed by the possibility of nuclear war:

Le ciel était d'une incroyable transparence  
 Et je me répétais comme c'est beau, la France,  
 Quand un nuage énorme et très lourd est monté.

Sans doute n'était-il qu'un nuage ordinaire,  
 Mais comment oublier tous ceux qui vont porter  
 La mort radioactive au hasard sur la terre?

Apart from these explicitly political and circumstantial poems, there is also very traditional and domestic subject-matter. In the previous chapter, I described how Aragon

interpreted Henri Pichette's ode to his newly-born son as a reaction against the naturalism of the modernists. Similarly, the violent eroticism of Guillevic's early poetry gives way to decidedly chaste sentiment. In "Vous avez tellement grandi" (TS, 72), the poet muses over the future of his daughters. And in two sonnets entitled "A Jacqueline" a familiar topos links love and landscape.

Finally, Guillevic joins in the polemic over *Poésie nationale* by making the sonnet itself a theme. The desire to link national and proletarian cultures is expressed in "A Stéphane Mallarmé". Guillevic begins by defending Mallarmé against his more violent detractors. His escape into an ivory tower is described as the reaction of a weak man to the triumph of capitalism:

Les bourgeois triomphaient. Leur jactance grossière  
T'épouvantait, toi qui gagnais bien mal ton pain  
En besognant. Humain, trop terriblement humain,  
Tu n'as su que les fuir pour hanter les lisières.  
(TS, 57)

As an alternative to Mallarmé's ideal of absence, Guillevic points out that the apparently unassailable "Prometheus" of the capitalist class is threatened by working-class revolt:

--Egal de Prométhée à qui manque un vautour--  
Mais le vautour est là qui t'assiège et te guigne  
Et la Commune l'atteignit et pour toujours.

The sonnet that Mallarmé conserved will therefore be turned from high culture towards popular struggle. In "Du sonnet" (TS, 71), Guillevic jokingly confronts the formal purists:

Ce n'est pas du sonnet, cette lourde farine,  
Il y a hiatus, ma césure est caprice  
Et mes rimes, voyons, manquent de pailleté.

The sonnet will not attempt to fulfil demands for sophistication. It will instead speak the raw and real:

N'érigez pas en loi ce qui est maladie.  
Quand un sonnet dit vrai, quand il vaut un serment,

Tout autre est son allure, autre sa mélodie.

Guillevic's sonnets are thus used to bring together national and proletarian cultures. This causes self-conscious use of the sonnet form. How the poet practises his theory will be described in the next chapter.

## 2.8) FORM

In the sonnets of this period are repeated formal features identified in chapter 4: discourse of promise; rhetorical addresses to the reader; colloquial and discursive style. Added to these formal features is uneven use of the rhyme and meter offered by regular form. In my conclusion, I will describe how the form of the sonnets expresses the peculiar nature of Guillevic's nationalism.

The structure of the poems convey both promise and discord. In some poems, the octave poses a problem, which the sestet resolves. In "Aux hommes de plus tard I", the octave contrasts a good future with a bad present, while the sestet asserts resistance. "La Musique" passes from the solitude evoked in the octave to affirmation in the sestet, from the present to a profusion of future tenses:

Je verrai ce qui naît, je vivrai ses efforts,  
Je saurai qui grandit. Ce sera la croisée  
Ouverte sur la lutte où mes frères sont forts.  
(TS, 55)

In "Matin", the divisions in time and space between white and black are abolished by a common desire for plenitude.

This structure is reversed in order to put forward a discordant message. In the octave of "H", Guillevic describes a harmonious natural scene. The final sestet disturbs the beautiful landscape of France, ending on the nuclear threat.

Addresses to the public are frequent. In "Sonnet dans le goût ancien", the poet addresses the nation:

Je vois partout camper l'armée américaine  
Et c'est intolérable, France, et déchirant. (TS, 51)

In "Et vous?", a description of madness throws into relief the madness of the uncommitted:

(...) il avait une autre espèce de folie  
 Que vous, mes amis, et les autres que voilà,  
 Qui vous plaignez assez que la vie est salie  
 Et qui ne faites rien pour changer tout cela. (TS, 52)

In *Trente et un sonnets*, the neo-classical style is far from dominant. As Guillevic wrote in "Du sonnet", the sophistication of high culture should not subordinate the telling of Communist truth. Despite the return to regular form, the language is often in an "anti-poetic" register, that is to say, it is colloquial and discursive. In "Aux hommes de plus tard", for example, the language is working-class: "avoir tant trimé comme des bêtes", "et malgré ça, cet-enfer-là" (TS, 45). As well as being colloquial, the language of the poem is also persuasive and explanatory, using such connectives as "alors", "c'est vrai que", "et malgré ça", "oui". This discursive style is taken to extremes in "Affaires", where Guillevic manages to press polemic into rhyme and alexandrines:

L'affaire des camions, c'est de la bagatelle.  
 C'est, comme on dit, une affaire de margoulin  
 Que réussit quiconque est tenace et malin  
 Et ce n'est pas à ça qu'un grand monsieur s'attelle.

Pour celui-ci la chose est moins accidentelle.  
 C'est vrai qu'il est sérieux et souvent châtelain  
 Et peut-être à la ville en état au moulin,  
 Car il est introduit. Il prend sous sa tutelle

L'intérêt général et sait, comme il se doit,  
 Les fautes de l'Etat et les marque du doigt.  
 Sa firme y pourvoira. Le fait est qu'on l'écoute

Et l'Administration examine avec lui  
 Comment réaliser son projet qui ne coûte  
 Pas grand-chose au Trésor, vu le franc aujourd'hui.  
 (TS, 66)

Not simply is the subject-matter prosaic, but the language has none of the difficulty of modernist poetry. It is a

cohesive and discursive explanation of a business activity and the government's collusion. There are very everyday asides--"comme on dit", "vu le franc aujourd'hui"--and everyday words--"margoulin", "malin", "grand monsieur". This creates humour: there is an incongruity between the prosaic subject matter and language and the fact that the poet is using rhymes and alexandrines. The rhymes and *enjambements* have no expressive effect; instead, the form stands on its own as a gesture.

If *Trente et un sonnets* has linguistic discontinuities, there is more consistency in *l'Age mûr*, which has the most neo-classical poems. The first sonnet of the collection is a love poem as celebration of political commitment. It takes a traditional rhetorical stance:

C'est mon automne, amour, ou mon été qui dure?

The syntax of the poem is even more confident than previously. The poem is in the present tense, the battle won, with the question of the opening line answered in line 12:

C'est mon été, mon bel été qui dure, amour.

Rhymes bring together the landscape and the inner space: "été-immensité-été-fierte"; the socialist pathetic fallacy: "nature-droiture"; and the new found historical purpose, "coeur-ardeur". Prosodically, the alexandrines are split at the caesura with variations within the hemistich. The eighth line has a classical stress pattern, 2+4//3+3:

Les blés sont avec moi pour la vie en droiture.

The form of Guillevic's sonnets express the nature of the nationalism of *Poésie nationale*. Firstly, the form is affected by the didacticism, invective and obligatory

optimism of the Zhdanov period. Secondly, both modernism and high culture are kept at bay: there is neo-classical style but also space for the discursive and the colloquial. It is an attempt at fusing national and proletarian cultures in a progressive definition of "France".



## 2.9) EXPLICATION--"En ville" (TS, 58)

Il est deux heures de l'après-midi. La ville  
 Entre la pluie et le soleil hésite encore  
 A croire que l'hiver, content de son record,  
 S'en va vraiment et veut bien la laisser tranquille.

Coups de marteaux, coups de marteaux encore et mille  
 Autres bruits du travail qui trouvent leur accord  
 Lorsque sur le chantier les cris se font plus forts.  
 --Est-ce le soleil neuf si tout semble fragile

Comme posé dans l'air à tel point qu'on dirait  
 Que ce travail ici n'est pas un travail vrai?  
 Est-ce le soleil neuf qui fait monter ce vague?

Ou si c'est de penser que du travail devient  
 Au Viet-Nam du napalm dont les immenses vagues  
 Ne laissent vivre rien sur leur passage, rien?

Jean Pierrot, in his very critical review of Guillevic's sonnets, finds one source of the poet's mistakes is his choice of narrowly political subject-matter. In addition to an excessive use of abstraction, a political thesis is grafted onto more classical themes. On the formal side, the sonnet is incompatible with Guillevic's "voice" with the following result: "la nécessité, pour remplir les exigences de cette forme, de concéder des clichés (...) ou des chevilles, des platitudes, du remplissage." (JP, 115)

There is truth in Pierrot's criticisms, and the examples he provides are just, but, in my view, the balance is not as negative as he claims. A sonnet like "En ville" shows skill in manipulation of the semantic and the prosodic to put forward a political message.

The poem begins with a very banal, prosaic statement of the time of day which, with the mute e enters the realm of poetry. Guillevic then uses the landscape as the occasion for political questioning. As has become familiar in this section, nature is in struggle. The long segmented sentence that makes up most of the first stanza conveys the hesitancy

between winter, symbol of death, and spring, symbol of regeneration, between the misery of the rain and the comfort of the sun.

In the second stanza, the theme of struggle is extended. "Coups de marteaux, coups de marteaux" expresses the noise of the busy workplaces, whose vigour is found throughout a harmonious, industrious landscape. But with *les cris* a discordant note appears.

With the eighth line, Guillevic breaks with the traditional separation of octave and sestet. Instead, the dash introducing the voice in line 8 splits the sonnet in half. Such a split is not simply neat: it reinforces the notion of fragility, the blank space expressing the content, "si tout semble fragile//Comme posé dans l'air". The fragility is in turn conveyed, on the semantic level, by the modal verbs and adverbs "comme" and "on dirait".

In the rhetorical half of the sonnet, Guillevic proceeds to uncover the real from the illusory. The "soleil neuf", repeated for emphasis, is interrogated as a cause for this hesitancy. But it is a means to the end of the political message: the clarity and realness of the new sun cannot possibly be responsible for a sense of vagueness and unreality. With the third question, the reader receives the truth. The reason for the hesitancy of the scene, and the poem's structure, is the direction of production not for the development of human potential, but rather for its destruction in colonial war. The "soleil neuf" of the hoped-for new life is ironically transformed into the blinding light and murderous flame of napalm. For once, the poem's form conveys certainty: the combination of "Viet-Nam/napalm"

emphasises the contemporary content, and the repetition of *rien* causes awareness of the weapon's effects. The cries that were growing in loudness are those of the anti-colonialists.

In conclusion, the poem cannot be said to make use of "des clichés (...) des chevilles, des platitudes, du remplissage". Yes, the message of the poem is unoriginal: Guillevic is reiterating his Party's line on colonial war. But its poetic execution is skilful: the semantic twists and the manipulation of structure and prosody show Guillevic's readiness to exploit the potential of the sonnet form.

## 2.10) EXPLICATION--"Les Trusts" (G, 55-70)

à François Billoux

- 1) Ni les fleurs, ni vos filles  
Ne nous font un rempart

Contre vos tentacules  
Où bougent des polices.

\*

- 2) Lanternes d'or vous êtes  
Au fond de longs couloirs  
Dans vos bureaux de laine,

A ne rien éclairer,  
A durer pour durer.

\*

- 3) Vous pourrissez, vous pourrissez  
Si lentement,

Et quand vous pourrissez  
Ce n'est pas que sur vous.

\*

- 4) Mais où est l'homme  
Dans tout cela?

Pour qui  
Ces paroles?

C'est pour des murs  
Ou pour des hommes?

Pour des papiers  
Ou pour des têtes?

Ils se réunissent  
Comme un matériel.

Et ça vole et ça tue,  
Par millions de corps.

\*

- 5) Pour vous qu'il chantait,  
L'absurde coucou.

Pour vous, au soleil,  
Son cri répété.

Pour vos coffres-forts  
Et pour vos bureaux,

Le cri du coucou  
Pareil à l'alcool.

\*

- 6) Nous n'avons que faire  
De vos plaisirs.

Nous n'avons que faire  
De vos paroles.

Nous n'avons à faire  
Que votre perte.

\*

- 7) Voici les genêts  
Et voici la mer.

Ecoutez un peu  
Comment on vous dit:

Contre l'avenir  
On ne force pas.

Ecoutez encore  
Comment on vous dit:

Que trahison  
Ne maintient pas.

\*

- 8) De vos bureaux de laine  
Vous convoquez le monde

Et vous serrez les mains  
Sur le butin du jour.

Sur tous les points du globe  
Vous pointez des épingles.

\*

- 9) Vous n'avez pas de lieu,  
Vous épinglez le globe.

Vos bureaux de velours  
N'ont pas de paysage  
Où s'attacher plutôt.

Les quartiers sont en bas  
Très bas, très loin de vous.

\*

- 10) Vous creusez du vide  
Autour de chacun.

Vous posez des murs  
Autour de chacun.

Vous aspirez tout  
Et laissez du vide

Cerné par des murs,  
Des idées de murs.

\*

- 11) Bien entre vous,  
Sur tout le globe,  
  
C'est l'un à l'autre  
Et l'un dans l'autre,

Bol d'araignées  
Mêlant leurs pattes,

Aussi leurs têtes,  
Pour s'embrasser ou s'absorber.

\*

- 12) Un corbeau bien vivant  
Qu'on couperait en deux  
  
Et les deux parties rouges  
Qui se regarderaient,  
  
C'est vous et nous.

\*

- 13) Si c'est être vainqueur  
Que réduire à merci  
  
Ceux qui font à la terre  
Donner ce qu'il vous faut,  
  
Alors, vous êtes forts  
Très souvent et vainqueurs.

\*

- 14) Vous voyez tout d'en haut  
Vous dirigez d'en haut.  
  
Vous regardez en bas,  
Vous observez le bas.  
  
C'est d'en bas,  
En effet,  
  
Que monteront les hommes  
Avec de grands visages.

\*

- 15) --Vous accrocher--  
C'est votre lot.

Et nous il faut  
Qu'on vous arrache.

\*

- 16) Vous avouerez:  
C'est plus qu'une brise  
Qui remue entre vous  
Les fils que vous tenez.

Orage et grand vent  
Sur le capital.

### *Introduction*

The purpose of my explication of "Les Trusts" will be both descriptive and evaluative. Firstly, I will show how the content of Guillevic's poem corresponds to the Communist world-view and how the form illustrates Guillevic's move towards political discourse. Secondly, I will suggest the limitations of this committed poetry, in anticipation of Guillevic's abandonment of it, which will be explained in the next chapter. Considering a positive view of this poem, that of Pierre Daix, I will argue that this poem is ultimately unsatisfactory.

#### *1) The Communist World-view*

The Communist view of history can be seen as a version of the Judeo-Christian narrative: the Fall, the valley of tears, ended by the Second Coming. For the communists, there is, with the advent of private property, a fall from the state of primitive communism, in which there is unity between man and man and man and nature. The history that follows is characterised by division: between man and man, in the form of class struggle, and between man and nature.

The story is ended by the proletariat, a propertyless class that is the self-conscious repository of all the victims of capitalist accumulation. With the final crisis of capitalism and the arrival in power of the proletariat, unity is restored.

In addition to this view of history, another major feature of the Communist world-view is the division between form and content. Communist critique delves beneath the illusions of ideology and exchange value to unveil the brute reality of class exploitation for surplus value. The greatest civilisations are, for the Communist, built on the greatest barbarism.

## 2) *"Les Trusts"*

This world-view of class division and demystification can be found in "Les Trusts". The poem begins by a delving beneath form to reveal content. Capitalism's pleasant and alluring façade hides the truth of violent coercion. The irony is reinforced by section 2: lanterns are reversed to not shine light, a denial of common sense.

Capitalism is described as a force of division. In section 2, the distance of the corridors and the deafness implied by wool emphasise the alienated nature of private property. Developed in the poem is the image of God Capital in His Tabernacle: he is at once rapacious, tentacular, and yet separate, elusive. In section 8, the business of the trusts expands across the world. At the same time, in section 9, the capitalists are placeless: by their



transactions in their high-rise offices, they are cut off from the reality of both soil and people.

Capitalism is described as a force promoting alienation. In section 3, the insipid decadence of capitalism infects the world it controls. It is the cause of disunity: in section 9, the two antagonistic classes, *vous* and *nous*, are brought into being by the disruption of organic unity. In section 10, capitalism constructs barriers between people and drains away plenitude. In section 4, the dictatorship of capitalist accumulation denies the nature of man.

Capitalism has therefore an ironic nature: the gains of capital are necessarily the losses of labour. For this reason, the anthem of capital is sung, in section 5, by "l'absurde coucou", a metaphor which links private property to the cuckoo usurping the nest that other birds have laboriously built. In section 13, the victory of capitalism is ironic, built on human suffering.

In opposition to this, Communism is presented as the inevitable victor. In section 7, the ciphers of nature prefigure the free life that is coming. And in section 14, from far below the high-rise offices of the trusts there is promised the rise of a new race of men, the revolutionary proletariat.

The poem therefore expresses, at the level of content, aspects of the Communist world-view: capitalism as a force of division, whose gains ironically create losses, and whose defeat, finally, is inevitable.

On the level of form, there are in this poem formal features identified in chapter 4: identification and division, discourse of promise, patterns of persuasion.

Guillevic operates a process of identification and division. It is an attack on *vous*, the capitalists, by *nous*, the Communists. In order to tip the balance in favour of the latter, the former are dehumanised by metaphors of spiders (11) and lanterns (2). In turn, a rhetorical question like "C'est pour des murs/Ou pour des hommes?" (4) is unmistakably weighted in favour of the Communist message.

This invective against capitalism is mixed with the discourse of promise. The metaphorical descriptions of class struggle are punctuated by resolutions to struggle, the poem ending on the future tense.

The construction of the micro-texts that make up the poem perform functions of defamiliarisation, confrontation and persuasion. Firstly, the separation of line-groups in the opening section allows emphasis on the revelation of brute reality. Secondly, the separation of line-groups in section 15 allows for a clear structure of confrontation between *nous* and *vous*. Thirdly, in the interests of persuasion, form encourages collaborative expectancy. In section 14, grammatical repetition of *vous+verb* and "en haut/en bas" convincingly places the capitalists in a simple ideological slot. Similarly, in section 6, the development of the structure "*nous/avoir/faire*" expresses the logic of resistance.

### 3) Daix's View of "Les Trusts"

In his study of Guillevic, Pierre Daix singles "Les Trusts" out for special praise. He makes three points in favour of this poem: it shows triumph over previous fear of

words and things; it brings the real and the moral back into poetry; and expresses truth by its involvement in social conflict.

Guillevic's poem, rather than expressing fear as in his early work, dispenses wisdom. Daix takes as a poetic precursor of this committed writing the gnomic utterances of Hesiod which had the role "de fixer dans la mémoire des hommes, à l'aide du rythme et des préceptes de religion, de morale ou même d'art et de science." (PD, 83)

Such a triumph over the world leads to the entry of morality and the real world into poetry. Daix ironically accuses Guillevic of "bad taste" for mentioning a realist word like *police* and venturing into the field of political economy. Bearing in mind his position in society, the poet creates "une poésie qui apprend, qui aide à comprendre." Away goes the alchemy of the word, in comes the word at the service of action. The modernist concern for "making strange" gives way to didacticism:

L'originalité n'est plus une question d'obscurité, un défi d'étrangeté, de bizarrerie, de jamais dit, mais d'être assez fort pour dire ce qui n'est pas permis, de le dire bien, crûment, sans que le lecteur puisse se méprendre, et que soudain ça se mette à lui trotter dans la tête, à le faire rêver ou à l'aider en tout cas à vivre. (PD, 81)

Despite its overthrow of the traditionally "poetic", Daix claims that "Les Trusts" is a real poem because of its commitment to the class struggle:

C'est un poème, un vrai poème qui dit ce qu'il était interdit aux poètes de dire, non par la Poésie avec les plus nobles majuscules, mais par la censure inavouée et inavouable d'une classe. (PD, 82)

The result of this commitment is that the poetic avant-garde returns to the political avant-garde. The innovatory, individualistic modernism expressed in Rimbaud's dictum "La

poésie ne rythmera pas l'action-- , elle sera en avant", is reversed by Daix:

on constate que Guillevic dit alors son mot dans la solution collective donnée par l'aile marchante de la poésie française à l'appel de Rimbaud. La poésie rythme l'action. C'est pour cela qu'elle est en avant. (PD,84)

### *Conclusion*

Pierre Daix's comments on "Les Trusts" are just. Guillevic's poem does have features that are not historically common to poetry: the language is simple and direct, sometimes colloquial--for instance, the use of *ça*--and deals with political subject-matter. Guillevic is trying to engage with the "real world" and put forward a Communist message.

But this committed style of poetry is soon abandoned by Guillevic, and it is worthwhile to ask why this should be so. I believe that Daix's emphasis on morality and clear understanding of a political message points to the weaknesses of Guillevic's poetry in this period and its short-lived nature.

A first point that can be made is to do with political developments. In "Les Trusts", there is a manichean division of the world into two camps, Communist and capitalist, which will not survive intact the revelations of Stalin's crimes.

More important is the point that Guillevic places too much emphasis on division and too little on unity. Guillevic is unable, in "Les Trusts", to step beyond the divisions of class society towards the dream of unity that is the culminating point of the Communist world-view. A significant moment in "Les Trusts" is when the speaker tells the capitalists:

Vous n'avez pas de lieu. (9)

This is a reversal of the original Communist message. In *The Communist Manifesto*, the workers had no nation, while capitalist expansion had provided the opportunity for a new "world literature". In this poem, it is the bourgeoisie that is accused of being nationless.

Such an emphasis on place, on a stable identity, is expressed in the rigidity of Guillevic's poem. At the levels of form and content, there is an interiorisation of division, rather than its transcendence. The process of identification and division involving *nous* and *vous* occurs with precision, but if the free life that is coming is *implied* in the poem, it is not prefigured by Guillevic. If Guillevic uses interesting metaphors, for instance that of the cuckoo, to attack the capitalists, when he moves into the future tense, the image of the revolution is a cliché: the winds of history blowing away capital.

"Les Trusts" is a good example of political invective in poetry—for this reason, Guillevic retains it, almost without modification, in his definitive edition of *Gagner*. But it is a genre of poetry inadequate to the demands of Guillevic's imagination. The poet is more at home in the neglected aspect of the Communist world-view: the restoration of unity between man and man and between man and nature. In the next section, after disillusionment with Stalinism, the poet will be engaged in exploration, searching for a *lieu*, but denying any definitive *lieu*, continually computing relations between man and things.

## 2.11) GUILLEVIC'S COMMITTED POETRY IN RETROSPECT

*Introduction*

In this chapter, I will appraise the period of Guillevic's committed poetry. Firstly, I will describe the poet's own comments on his committed writing. Secondly, I will describe their expression in the re-editions of *Gagner* and *Terre à bonheur*. I will conclude by discussing the implications of Guillevic's experience as *poète-militant*.

*1) Guillevic's Retrospective view*

In recent interviews, Guillevic has expressed a negative view of his experience as *poète-militant*. It was a time of artistic self-denial and harmful sacrifice of the individual to the collective.

Looking back at this period, Guillevic regards it as an artistic low-point:

A la vérité, avec le recul du temps, je m'aperçois que j'ai traversé une période de presque dix ans de basses eaux: la poésie comme arme de combat, le poème-tract.  
(VP, 145-6)

The attempt to link poetry up to civic action led to the weakening of the self-criticism essential to artistic success:

J'écrivais, mais lorsque ce qu'on appelle l'inspiration, le jaillissement poétique baissent, l'esprit critique baisse aussi. C'est ce qui est grave. Il faut être au meilleur de soi-même pour avoir un très bon esprit critique. Créer--je n'aime pas ce mot--, écrire, faire quelque chose de neuf et se critiquer, voir clair dans ce que l'on fait, cela va ensemble.  
(VP, 146)

The period was therefore one of *mauvaise foi*, of self-deception. Contact with words in their vitality was lost:

Pour moi, cette période se caractérise moins par un manque de contact avec les choses, avec la vie même, que par un moindre contact ou un contact autre avec les mots dans leur vitalité. Dans mon être conscient, j'avais plus ou moins fait mienne la fameuse "gueule de bois". (VP, 149)

An aspect of this period is Guillevic's attempt to liquidate individualism, to become part of the collective consciousness of the movement. This view of art and life is now reversed. Guillevic holds apart individual and collective:

(...) c'est une erreur profonde de croire que, pour se libérer de son angoisse personnelle, la confondre avec l'angoisse collective suffirait. C'est toujours en vain. (TB 2, 120)

The Marxism that was erstwhile celebrated as revelatory and uplifting, is now expelled from the self into the realm of politics:

Le marxisme me paraissait marquer le domaine de l'économie, mais aussi celui de la vie intérieure. C'est une erreur. (TB 2, 121)

Guillevic now looks upon the mood and the language of that time as alien, an external, discomfiting graft. His opinion of their artistic quality is severe:

J'avais succombé au discours, à l'éloquence, à l'emploi de trop nombreux adjectifs. Il y avait dans ces poèmes un optimisme dont il a bien fallu déchanter. Déchanter dans les deux sens du mot: perdre ses illusions et s'éloigner du lyrisme. (TB 2, 122)

## 2) The Re-editions

These reservations were put into practice in the re-edition of the collections of this period. *Gagner* was re-edited, while *Envie de vivre* and *Terre à bonheur* were revised and

combined in a volume of the latter's title. Changes are prompted by political disillusionment; the desire for universality; an attenuation of the poet's enthusiasm for the cause; and a desire for formal ordering.

One significant change is an obviously political one: the omission of the poem "Au camarade Staline". Even if this poem had been successful from an artistic point of view, political disillusionment excluded it:

(...) nous avons été trompés. Nous avons cru à la bonté de Staline, au bonheur promis. Nous avons appris ensuite que la réalité était autre. (TB 2, 122)

In my discussion of "Les charniers", I alluded to Predrag Matvejevitch's distinction between *singularité* and *universalité*. The attempt to drag the poem from the confines of space and time is one of the things that the re-editions do. Guillevic excludes the poems that are reactions to the Greek Civil War, to the relations between France and Spain, and to the privatisation of the Indo-Chinese bank. In "Exposé", the passages on Henri Martin, as well as the lyrical celebration of the U.S.S.R. disappear. In "Le goût de la paix", the Korean children haunting their American murderers become children in general protesting against death.

Guillevic's later mood and style affect the re-editions. There is an attempt to escape from the eloquence and obligatory optimism that he criticises. "La Misère" and "Une Autre guerre" remain as anti-poverty and anti-war messages, but the peroration and collective promise of the former, and the sustained invective at the end of the latter, are removed. The image of the girl in the red dress at the end of "Soleil" becomes *suggestive* as political metaphor,



Guillevic suppressing the subsequent explication of the symbol and exhortation of the reader.

In the re-editions, enthusiasm is significantly tempered. "Dedans", in the original edition of *Gagner*, ended on an optimistic note:

Mais celui qui va mourir  
Dans le combat de tous,  
Lorsqu'il voit vos couleurs  
Annoncées devant lui. (G, 135)

But in the re-edition, this poem, renamed "Primevère", ends in suspense:

Ce n'est pas sûr.

The poem "Ensemble" ended on a positive, collective note, with a resolution to struggle. Re-edited as "Ton visage", there is a move from the collective to the intimate, the poem ending on the tears of the lover. And in "Exposé", the later scepticism of Guillevic removes the certainty of knowledge previously boasted.

Finally, from a more formal point of view, Guillevic suppresses needless repetition. Thus in "Exposé"

Le soleil,  
C'est quelque chose.  
C'est du chaud, plus le soleil,  
De la clarté dans le soleil (TB, 15-16)

becomes in the later edition

Le soleil,  
C'est du chaud,  
Plus de la clarté  
Dans le soleil (TB 2, 21)

In turn, Guillevic imposes syllabic regularity. The lines of "Exposé"

L'orgue est partout.  
C'est un grand orgue qu'on entend  
Mais qui dure.

become the regular

L'orgue est partout.

C'est le grand orgue  
 Qu'on entend moins  
 Qu'on ne devine. (TB 2, 11)

### *Conclusion*

What are the implications of the revisions and of the period of Guillevic's committed writing in general?

To begin with it should not be concluded that all of Guillevic's literary output from the Liberation to 1955 is lacking in worth. In my explications I have argued the contrary: "Les charniers" impresses by its dramatisation of the response to circumstance; "En ville" exploits the sonnet form to put forward a political message; and "Les Trusts", for all its faults, is a direct piece of invective. These poems show that political concern and poetry are not completely incompatible.

However, Guillevic's particular form of commitment can be seen to have negative consequences. It leads to obligatory optimism; heavy and obvious use of metaphor—for instance, the winds of history in "Les Trusts" and the red dress in "Soleil"; occasional poetry that does not attain the universality of "Les charniers"; and laziness at the level of form. Guillevic's unquestioning adherence to the Party precludes doubt or exploration. In turn, the utilitarian view of poetry as at the service of political leadership encourages the underestimation of the importance of form.

The negative experience as *poète-militant* has wider political implications. The low worth of the poetry points to the failure of Stalinism: in opposition, it sacrifices the creativity of the membership to obedience to the

leadership; while in power creates an authoritarian structure which stifles civil society. After 1956, the trend has been, in Communist Parties and Communist societies, towards more democracy, more tolerance of difference, with less emphasis on the state and more on self-management. Guillevic's subsequent poetry follows this trend: commitment to wisdom dispensed by a political hierarchy is replaced by the open-ended commitment to founding a world amidst chaos.

## SECTION 3—ONENESS AND CHAOS

### 3.1) BIOGRAPHY 1956-

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I will describe four salient features of Guillevic's life from 1956 to the present day. Firstly, I will describe his career as a writer, including his work in translation. Secondly, I will summarise the new conception of poetry outlined by Guillevic in speeches. Thirdly, I will describe his notion of the poet's role as revealer of the sacred. And finally, I will trace the development of Guillevic's political commitment.

#### *1) Literary Development*

The episode of *Poésie nationale* was the height of Guillevic's involvement as *poète-militant*: individual sensibility was discarded in favour of the word as arm in the combat for Communism against Capitalism. This political and artistic ambition was dealt a severe blow soon after by the revelation of Stalin's crimes by Nikita Krushchev in his "secret speech" to the twentieth congress of the CPSU:

C'est dire combien terrible a été le choc causé par les révélations du XXe congrès du parti communiste de l'U.R.S.S. et principalement la découverte des crimes de Staline. J'en ai été assommé pendant des mois et des mois. Je ne suis pas encore sûr d'en être remis (...) J'en ai dès lors conclu que je devais me méfier de moi-même dans tout ce qui touche au domaine politique et que, décidément, j'étais bien plus poète qu'homme d'action. (VP, 147)

This brusque severance of the link between poet and politics was followed by a silence on Guillevic's part which

lasted until the publication of *Carnac* in 1960. During this time, Guillevic turned to translation, producing French versions of, among others, the Alsatian poet Nathan Katz, and, from the German language, Goethe, Lenau, Hölderlin and Trakl. Guillevic also made the acquaintance of the Hungarian journalist Ladislás Gara, which led to his collaboration in the translation of poetry by Attila Jozsef and other Magyar writers.

If Guillevic did not publish his own work immediately after the revelation of the crimes of Stalin, he nevertheless felt his way back to the sources of inspiration. In 1956 and 1957, Guillevic wrote many small poems in regular verse on animals. More importantly, with the encouragement of André Frénaud and Marcel Arland, he emerged from the impasse that committed poetry had led him into. The breakthrough was "Chemin", later published in *Sphère*:

Après "Chemin", j'ai complètement abandonné la versification classique et l'inspiration qui va avec elle puisque forme et fond s'épousent. (VP, 157-8)

From this moment a double movement of concentration and expansion characterises Guillevic's literary career. With the long poem *Carnac*, he recovered his roots and his voice:

*Carnac* a été une grande joie pour moi, une délivrance. Je me retrouvais vraiment, je retrouvais mon pays, la terre, la mer, je me revivais tel que j'avais été.

At the same time, from the beginning of the 1960s, and especially after his retirement from the Civil service in 1967, Guillevic has travelled widely, mainly to festivals and representing the *Union des Ecrivains* of which he was a co-founder in May 1968. His itinerary includes all of Europe, North America, as well as Asian countries: Ceylon,

Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Singapore. The international reputation of Guillevic grows in this period. His poems are translated into languages as diverse as Hindi, Bengali, Tartar, Chinese and Turkish. About twenty books have been published abroad in all of the European languages, including Alsatian, Occitan and Breton.

## 2) *A New Conception of Poetry*

After the brazen denunciation of "formal individualism" and the utilitarian reduction of poetry in the previous period, Guillevic develops, in the course of interviews, articles and speeches, a more subtle and complex conception of poetry and the role of the poet.

In *Vivre en poésie*, the critical faculty that Guillevic claims was missing in the previous period, returns as the rational complement to the ecstasy of writing. Raw experience is sculpted by words and the intertextual network to which they belong:

Il faut revivre intensément, en profondeur, l'expérience qui a donné naissance au poème, fouiller, arracher, gratter dans le tissu de cette expérience. Les mots, la syntaxe, tout ce qui constitue l'idiome sont les instruments de ce travail, et bien sûr aussi les multiples souvenirs, les références qu'apportent la fréquentation des poètes du passé et du présent ainsi que celle de ses propres poèmes. (VP, 169)

With this, Guillevic's description of the poetic process becomes very similar to that of Jean Tortel described in the opening section. The combination of form and content, order and disorder, gives birth to the poem:

C'est par ce travail où raison et délire paraissent se repousser et s'épouser au point de provoquer un état de stupeur ou d'angoisse qu'est réalisée l'adéquation entre--je ne saurais dire avec plus de précision--quoi et quoi. (VP, 169)

Less generally and more specifically on the style of his poetry, Guillevic emphasises the interplay between words and silence that characterises, for him, the modern period:

J'ai déjà "défini" la poésie: les noces de la parole et du silence. Je l'ai défini aussi comme une sculpture du silence. C'est précisément cette inclusion du silence dans les mots qui distingue le poème de la prose. La difficulté est de faire entendre le silence, de le faire sentir. Je dirais même de le faire toucher. (VP, 186)

At the same time, Guillevic replaces classical form with open form, the path of writing "à la recherche d'on ne sait pas précisément quoi" (VP, 169). His poems are a *suite* of relatively autonomous micro-poems, a form Guillevic describes by recourse to scientific analogy:

Chaque texte ayant cette autonomie verbale à l'intérieur de la suite, je ne peux pas l'appeler strophes, fragments: étant donné l'unité de l'ensemble, celui-ci constitue un poème. Je n'ai trouvé d'autre solution qu'à partir de *Du domaine*, où les poèmes sont tellement courts que je les ai baptisés quanta, par référence à la théorie de Max Planck. Le poème n'est-il pas une forme de l'énergie? Énergie destinée à atteindre le lecteur, et le résultat sera...imprévisible. (VP, 170)

This new poetic form does not entail an end to the social responsibility of the writer. Instead, an assertion of the autonomy of poetry goes hand in hand with the ambitious vision of the *poète-savant*. In "On engage sa vie, pas son écriture seule", Guillevic reverses the priority of *volonté* over *nécessité* that characterised his Stalinist phase:

Dans la mesure où je suis marxiste et communiste, ce que j'écris le sera. On ne dirige pas Pégase, même vers l'abattoir! Parfois, je me suis efforcé, j'ai écrit contre la guerre, pour les Rosenberg, j'ai dédié un poème à Staline (...) En général, ces poèmes, plus voulus que jaillis, n'étaient pas bons. (1)

Guillevic reclaims the depths of the writer's soul but, eschewing the strictly private, sees the poetic process as transpersonal:



Le poème ne peut résulter que de l'expression d'une émotion profonde. Ecrire, c'est faire un objet verbal à partir de cette émotion qui met le poète en relation avec l'"autre" comme disait Rimbaud, c'est-à-dire avec le monde. (2)

This transpersonal experience is rooted in the social by the fact that it is a work of language. The poet works the nation's language, reinvigorating and strengthening it, and this supreme skill with language places the poet in the flow of history:

C'est cette sensibilité particulière à la langue nationale qui fonde son droit d'exprimer les mouvements profonds du peuple, lequel vit sa vie dans sa langue. Le poète est le porte-parole naturel du peuple. (3)

Similarly, in his speech on "le poète et le monde social", Guillevic rejects external, institutional influences and commands on poetry:

Ce serait, certes, pour lui, commettre l'erreur signalée que de décider qu'il s'engage dans telle voie à travers le réel, pour des raisons extérieures à ses exigences de poète. (4)

Nevertheless, Guillevic does not reject all socially responsible poetry. His assertion of the autonomy of poetry is followed by a recuperation of *poésie de circonstance*:

Mais ces exigences, son besoin profond de poète peuvent être infléchis par ses préoccupations d'homme, de citoyen. La poésie de la Résistance ne le démontre-t-elle pas? Les horreurs de l'occupation et du nazisme n'ont-elles pas forcé certains poètes à ouvrir leur zone poétique à l'histoire, parce qu'alors ils se sont sentis responsables de l'histoire qui se faisait? (5)

The significant absence here is that of the "socialist realist" poetry which characterised Guillevic's work of the previous period. The audience of his work extends from the revolutionary vanguard to humanity in general:

Je n'écris pour aucune catégorie sociale, pour aucune classe. J'écris pour d'autres moi-même. Je ne sais pas. J'écris aussi haut que je peux. Viendra qui voudra et pourra. J'écris pour tous, ayant conscience que, de nos jours encore, le niveau culturel des masses leur permet mal l'accès aux poèmes de poètes. (6)

If the Leninist avant-garde has dropped out of sight, the avant-garde artistic message spelt out by Arthur Rimbaud is retained. Poetry is given a privileged, leading role in the progress of mankind:

(...) c'est la fonction même de la poésie de tendre à rendre présente "la vraie vie". Et pour cela d'adapter l'homme au monde et le monde à l'homme. (7)

In contradiction of Pierre Daix, in his comments on "Les Trusts" mentioned in the previous section, poetry is described by Guillevic as delving into the unknown, extending consciousness:

Enrichir l'homme de sensations nouvelles, de sentiments nouveaux, de penses nouveaux, de façons nouvelles de sentir. (8)

### *3) The Poet and the Sacred*

The failure of stalinism does not therefore confine Guillevic's later poetry in the realm of private sensibility. Instead, Guillevic's conception of poetry, however modified, remains ambitious. The poet is given the role of reconstituting holiness in the profane world of modern times.

Guillevic looks back to a time when man's experience of the holy was total:

Dans les sociétés primitives, il n'y avait pas le profane et le sacré, tout était sacré: manger, marcher, dormir (...) Ces hommes vivaient à longueur de temps le sacré. (VP, 159)

In turn, the present role of the poet is return society to the sacred:

En tant que matérialiste, j'invoque le sacré. Je rêve d'une société qui baignerait dans le sacré. Pour moi, le poète doit aider les autres à vivre le sacré dans la vie quotidienne. Le sacré, ce sentiment qui vous exalte, force votre respect, vous fait frôler quelque

...chose qui vous grandit et peut vous détruire. Le risque de la joie totale. (VP, 159)

With this, Guillevic is proposing a *sacré sans Dieu*. If, by inverting the holy, the poet is conferring nobility and grandeur on life, he is simultaneously rejecting any transcendent deity. The culminating point of this process is the heaven on earth that Guillevic calls *la fête*:

(...) le temps viendra où se verra cette communauté fraternelle du poète et d'un nombre de plus en plus grand de lecteurs. Alors sera venu le temps qui sera celui où l'homme aura sa fête sur la terre[...] Alors sera fini le temps de l'aliénation, de la faim, de la guerre, de la lutte des classes. (9)

### 3) Guillevic and Politics

Guillevic's description of *la fête* in the previous quotation, spoken in 1966, still draws on the millenarian dream of Communism. It therefore shows that the disappointment with Stalin affected Guillevic's enthusiasm, rather than uprooting deeply held convictions. Indeed, as late as 1979, in *Vivre en poésie*, Guillevic eloquently expressed his faith in socialist change led by the French Communist Party:

Pour moi, aujourd'hui plus que jamais, le capitalisme est néfaste et moralement condamné. Nous subissons tous la crise générale du capitalisme. Je suis partisan d'un socialisme démocratique autogestionnaire. Il appartiendra aux hommes qui auront fait la révolution de trouver les voies et les moyens de la réalisation d'une société sans classes où l'individu pourra se développer. (VP, 199)

These convictions notwithstanding, the period after 1956 is characterised by a growing critical distance taken by Guillevic vis-à-vis the PCF. In 1968, he was disappointed by the Communist Party's lukewarm response to the May events. In 1972, on a cultural visit to Brezhnev's U.S.S.R. he found

a society riddled with corruption and paranoia which contrasted painfully with the optimistic country he saw at the time of Krushchev. In 1981, after the PCF's support for the invasion of Afghanistan, Guillevic quit a Communist movement which, in his view, had made an insufficient break with Stalinism.

If Guillevic's conception of poetry in this period shows elements which are identifiably socialist, his political outlook becomes more complex. Alongside his difficult relationship with the PCF, Guillevic becomes involved in Breton regionalist politics. His socialism is combined with a regionalist refusal of the technocrats of the centre:

La Bretagne est traitée comme l'était l'Algérie. Par exemple, la culture bretonne est écrasée, le breton interdit, même dans la famille. Je n'ai pas eu accès au breton, que je n'ai découvert que tardivement. Le mouvement actuel est important: il s'agit de retrouver ses sources contre l'uniformisation imposée par le capitalisme centralisateur décadent. (10)

### *Conclusion*

After the shock of the revelations of Stalin's crimes, there is an attenuation of Guillevic's enthusiasm as Communist, leading finally to his abandonment of the Party. Poetry moves away from party politics and takes on a universal significance: it is the result of openness to the other and manifests the holy. A reflection of this movement from the strictly human to the transpersonal is Guillevic's interest in Breton culture as an alternative to modern capitalist society.

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### 3.2) HISTORY

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter I will describe the two historical trends in which Guillevic's work after 1956 can be situated. Firstly, I will describe the failure of Communism in France and in the world. Secondly, I will describe the rising ecological world-view, which is holistic, not narrowly human-oriented and is hostile to modern industry, socialist or capitalist. In my conclusion, I will argue for the usefulness of Jean-François Lyotard's term "postmodern" in describing the work of Guillevic in this period. Lyotard's theory of the collapse of "grand narratives" is pertinent to the poet's work if his poetry is understood as following *in the wake of* the failure of Communist modernisation.

#### *1) The Failure of Communism*

The secret speech of Nikita Kruschev marks the crucial turning point in the history of the Communist movement. His revelation of Stalin's use of genocide, torture and arbitrary, personal power only confirmed reports that Communists had denounced as hostile propaganda. The Revolution genuinely had devoured its children and betrayed its principles.

The events following the speech deepened the crisis of the Communist movement. The intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, the invasion of Afghanistan, the massacres in China and Romania

in 1989, linked Communism with the violent denial of popular and national sovereignty. In turn, the economic stagnation and gross inefficiency of the Communist states discredited a planned economy which, if it had overcome backwardness, was unable to compete in the world system.

If the Communist movement had promised free development and material abundance, in practice it could only offer security in mediocrity. The Party-State, the official ideology, the command-and-administer model, fettered initiative in economy and civil society, while encouraging the growth of grandiose and eventually murderous personality cults.

From the mid-1950s, the Communist movement begins to disintegrate. In addition to the Sino-Soviet and Tito-Soviet splits, there was increasing disaffection in Parties in the non-Communist world. A painful process of de-Stalinisation brought about respect for national particularity, as well an escape from class reductionism. A reconciliation with what was previously denounced as "petty-bourgeois" democracy put into question the splits between Social-Democratic and Communist Parties, causing either a marginalisation of smaller parties or, in the case of the Italians, a transformation into the former type.

This process continued in spectacular fashion with the wave of revolutions of 1989. The hard-line leaderships were brushed aside, while the Communists turned in a Social-Democratic or democratic socialist direction. Such revolutions confirmed the end of the momentum set off by the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In France, the enthusiasm with which the Party embraced Stalinism and Zhdanovism meant that de-Stalinisation was a difficult process. In the realm of poetry, Party diktat gave way to the refound freedom of the poet. Louis Aragon, instigator of *Poésie nationale*, returned, after 1956, to free verse and personal concerns, while, as editor of *Les Lettres Françaises*, he encouraged new, innovative writing, including that of dissidents in Communist countries. The political leadership of the PCF distanced itself from the Soviet model by condemning the military intervention in Czechoslovakia and abandoning the concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". However, this break with the past was hardly clean. The PCF continued to celebrate the supremacy of the socialist world and retained a democratic centralist structure which marginalised dissent. The prevention of no-holds-barred debate on the future of socialism and the persistent apologia for Soviet actions, for instance the invasion of Afghanistan, provoked the defection of many leading, mainly young members. By the beginning of the 1990s, the PCF had sunk to the level of a minor party supported by declining social groups, abandoned by the French intelligentsia.

## 2) *The Ecological World-view*

If, after 1956, Communism declines as a workable alternative to capitalist society, an alternative to the state of things is provided by the ecological world-view. This is a world-view which emphasises the inter-relatedness of phenomena and refuses an anthropocentric view of the universe. To describe



this world-view, I will summarise the arguments of Fritjof Capra in *The Turning Point* and the Oriental philosophy to which it is indebted.

The "turning point" in Capra's book is the supersession of the Cartesian view of the universe by the discoveries of the new physics. The old world-view, what Capra calls the "Newtonian World-Machine" can be characterised as follows: mechanical interaction; exact, knowable laws; a division between mind and matter; and absolute time and space. This world-view is severely disturbed by the discoveries of the new physics--relativity, quantum theory--which necessitate profound changes in conceptions of space, time, object, and cause and effect. Capra describes the change thus:

In contrast to the mechanistic Cartesian view of the world, the world view emerging from the modern physics can be characterised by words like organic, holistic, and ecological. It might also be called a systems-view, in the sense of general systems theory. The universe is no longer seen as a machine, made up of a multitude of objects, but has to be pictured as one indivisible, dynamic whole whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of a cosmic process. (1)

In *The Turning Point*, Capra extends the discoveries of the new physics to other realms, each time emphasising the interrelatedness of all phenomena--physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural. For instance, in criticising modern economics, Capra argues that the economy is merely one aspect of a whole ecological and social fabric, a living system composed of human beings in continual interaction with one another and with the natural resources, most of which are living organisms. He criticises biomedical science for concentrating too much on the machine-like properties of living matter and has neglected to study its organismic or systemic nature. Capra prefers

soft technologies--negotiation, cooperation, recycling--and an idea of health which unites mind, body and environment. With this, Capra identifies with Oriental thinking, either in talking about health and the flow of *ch'i* or generally, talking about the necessary complementarity of the *yin* and the *yang*. For Capra, rational, analytical thinking must be complemented by intuitive knowledge, based on a direct, nonintellectual experience of reality in an expanded state of awareness.

Interest in the Orient is linked to the rising ecological world-view. For our purposes, Oriental philosophy may be characterised as follows. If Western thought is analytical, Eastern thought is synthetic. In the West, rational thought attempts to break up the world into laws, categories and concepts which allow action on that world. In the East, unity exists in diversity and the particular identifies with the universal, producing in Taoism, for instance, indefinite judgements in which contraries are juxtaposed. A refusal of conceptual thought in the Oriental mind combines with a valorisation of art. For the Taoists, art is the intuition of unity, the fusion of subject and object, self and cosmos. Oriental notions of nondifferentiation and nonconceptualisation may be mobilised as a critique of Western society. In *L'Esprit synthétique de la Chine*, Liou Kia-Hway writes:

Le défaut fondamental de la raison occidentale consiste à découper le réel complexe et entremêlée en des idées claires et distinctes de l'homme. Cette puissance d'abstraction humaine étouffe en Occident toute étude pénétrante de l'être ontologique dont l'âme est l'intériorité concentrée et la profondeur entremêlée.  
(2)

Such a world-view criticises the belief of both Communists and Capitalists that the aim of human activity is the increase in the knowledge, power and well-being of humanity. The effect of the ecological world-view is to place man in a vast network of relations which escapes the human frame. If the dominant ideologies of modernity celebrate man's freedom to know and exploit his environment, here man becomes responsible to the non-human. In turn, man ceases to be a strictly social being, and becomes more of a *cosmic* being.

### *Conclusion*

In his essay on scientific knowledge, *La Condition postmoderne*, Jean-François Lyotard characterises the modern as linked to "grand narratives":

Quand ce métadiscours [philosophy] recourt explicitement à tel ou tel grand récit, comme la dialectique de l'esprit, l'herméneutique du sens, l'émancipation du sujet raisonnable ou travailleur, le développement de la richesse, on décide d'appeler "moderne" la science qui s'y réfère pour se légitimer.

(3)

The postmodern, however, is characterised by a refusal of such grand narratives, and by a subsequent dispersal of language games:

La fonction narrative perd ses fonctions, le grand héros, les grands périls, les grands périples et le grand but. Elle se disperse en nuages d'éléments langagiers narratifs, mais aussi dénotatifs, prescriptifs, descriptifs, etc. (4)

The postmodern emerges with the breakdown of totalising perspectives, political, historical or scientific. Lyotard calls "postmodern" science which provokes and investigates instability:

En s'intéressant aux indécidables, aux limites de la précision et du contrôle, aux quanta, aux conflits à l'information incomplète, aux "fracta", aux catastrophes, aux paradoxes pragmatiques, la science postmoderne fait la théorie de sa propre évolution comme discontinue, catastrophique, non rectifiable, paradoxale. (5)

Lyotard's portrayal of science as the cutting edge of the "postmodern" is unsatisfactory. The case can be made equally well that the subversion of positivist science by relativity and quantum theory at the beginning of this century coincides with the emergence of the "modernist" sensibility in the arts. Published in 1979, *La Condition postmoderne* is describing elements that extend well into the "modern" period.

The ecological world-view described above cannot satisfactorily provide an example of postmodernity as the collapse of grand narratives. This world-view does oppose the ideology of growth and industrial progress, but as the History chapter in section 1 suggested, the valorisation of the organic and the pre-industrial is as old as modernity itself. Ecology is more anti-modern than postmodern, finding its roots in the archaic, for instance in Oriental philosophy.

Lyotard's definition of the "postmodern condition" as the collapse of grand narratives is very useful, however, when describing the third period of Guillevic's work. Guillevic's poetry can be seen as trailing *in the wake of* the grand narrative of Communism.

In the Communist narrative of history, the revolutionaries are not hostile to modernity. In *The Communist Manifesto* (6), Marx and Engels praise the dynamism of capitalist accumulation. The Communists are not anti-

modern, like the ecologists, but rather criticise capitalist modernity from within. According to the revolutionaries, capitalist ownership places fetters on the forces of production, provoking recurrent crises. With the proletarian revolution, the energies of modernity will be released, rational subjugation of nature will provide an abundance of goods and pave the way to the end of class antagonism.

From 1956 onwards, it became obvious that the communist attempt to capture and guide modernity had failed. It is in this context that Guillevic's work is an expression of the "postmodern": if, in the previous section, the poet celebrated the power of man and the inevitability of revolution, now Guillevic becomes aware of the failure of revolution and turns against the industrial modernity his Party had tried to appropriate. It is Guillevic's deep commitment to the Communist grand narrative that throws into relief the "postmodern" nature of the third period. After the class against class opposition of the second period, there is the alternation of oneness and chaos: a desire for unity with the cosmos alternates with awareness of a world fallen into disorder.

#### *References*

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- 3) J-F Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris, 1979), 9
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### 3.3) *Carnac*--WORLD AND CHAOS

#### *Introduction*

In the previous section on Guillevic's period as *poète-militant*, I showed how a dominant theme was the "socialist pathetic fallacy". Nature was presented in these poems as dialectical and progressive. There was complicity between nature and a rational, Marxist man who played the crucial leading role.

In *Carnac*, in the wake of Krushev's speech, this complicity between man, nature and time explodes. The Marxist narrative of historical time moving towards final reconciliation--its version of the Judeo-Christian narrative--is undermined in *Carnac* by *eternal recurrence* and *radical alterity*.

*Carnac* introduces the reader to the version of the sacred/profane opposition which dominates the third period of Guillevic's work. This opposition manifests itself in spatial imagery and an attitude to time different from that during his Stalinist period. Before proceeding with the explication of this poem, I would like to summarise the world/chaos opposition described by Mircea Eliade in his book, *Le Sacré et le profane*, because it helps understand Guillevic's presentation of space and time, plus his emphasis on *pesanteur*.

According to Eliade, space is not homogeneous for religious man: it has fissures, breaks, parts of space which are qualitatively different from others. This spatial heterogeneity is expressed in an opposition between sacred

space, the only one to exist *really*, and the rest, a formless surrounding expanse. Eliade points to a fundamental division between *world* and *chaos*:

Ce qui caractérise les sociétés traditionnelles, c'est l'opposition qu'elles sous-entendent entre leur territoire habité et l'espace inconnu et indéterminé qui l'entoure: le premier, c'est le "Monde" (plus précisément: "notre monde"), le Cosmos; le reste, ce n'est plus un Cosmos, mais une sorte d'"autre monde", un espace étranger, chaotique, peuplé de larves, de démons, d'"étrangers" (assimilés, d'ailleurs, aux démons et aux fantômes). A première vue, cette rupture dans l'espace semble due à l'opposition entre un territoire habité et organisé, donc "cosmisé", et l'espace inconnu qui s'étend au-delà de ses frontières: on a, d'une part, un "Cosmos" et d'autre part, un "Chaos". Mais on verra que, si tout territoire habité est un "Cosmos", c'est justement parce qu'il a été préalablement consacré, parce que, d'une manière ou d'une autre, il est l'oeuvre des dieux ou communique avec leur monde. Le "Monde" (c'est-à-dire: "notre monde") est un univers à l'intérieur duquel le sacré s'est déjà manifesté, où, par conséquent, la rupture des niveaux est possible et répétable. (1)

Eliade proceeds to make an inventory of sacred space, which ranges from the cathedral to the temple to the mandala, all of which found a centre of the world and link sky and earth. Eliade summarises their function thus:

(...) là où le sacré se manifeste dans l'espace, le *réel se dévoile*, le Monde vient à l'existence. Mais l'irruption du sacré ne projette pas seulement un point fixe au milieu de la fluidité amorphe de l'espace profane, un "Centre" dans le "Chaos"; elle effectue également une rupture de niveau, ouvre la communication entre les niveaux cosmiques (la Terre et le Ciel) et rend possible le passage, d'ordre ontologique, d'un mode d'être à un autre. C'est une telle rupture dans l'hétérogénéité de l'espace profane qui crée le <<Centre>> par où l'on peut communiquer avec le <<transcendant>>; qui, par conséquent, fonde le <<Monde>>, le Centre rendant possible l'*orientatio*. (2)

Further on in his essay, Eliade makes a similar division between sacred and profane time. Religious communities attempt by various means to return to the original, sacred time. One of these methods is the *fête*. Here is Eliade's description:

Une fête se déroule dans le Temps originel. C'est justement la réintégration de ce Temps originel et sacré qui différencie le comportement humain *pendant* la fête de celui d'*avant* où d'*après*. Dans beaucoup des cas, on se livre durant la fête aux *mêmes* actes que dans les intervalles non fériés, mais l'homme religieux croit qu'il vit alors un *autre* Temps, qu'il a réussi à retrouver l'*illud tempus* mythique. (3)

In *Carnac*, and throughout the third period of Guillevic's work, there is the desire to find a space where a "world" can be founded, which overcomes surrounding chaos. In the midst of time which has become hostile, rather than complicit, there is the desire to find the *fête*, or sacred time where Guillevic's version of religious man can plunge towards the origin.

Significantly, Guillevic's return to his native Carnac does not entail a rumination exclusively on the menhirs, what we normally associate with Carnac. To speak of standing stones would place emphasis on the notions of permanence and *pesanteur*. Guillevic is primarily interested in the ocean. Contemplating the unfurling of the waves, the poet describes the struggle between the founding of a world and surrounding chaos, between a stable identity and encroaching otherness.

With this, Guillevic explores the theme of the sacred: the desire of all elements in the poem is to achieve dimension, the "more real" as Eliade calls it. But the sacred is continually problematic. The poem is a swarm of conflicts: how can a stable space be found that is not overwhelmed by profane time and space? And how can the holy be found without recourse to a transcendental God?

At the end of this chapter, I will describe the effect of this changed world-view on the form of Guillevic's poem.



1) *The Sea's Desire for Dimension*

The sea plays a central role in this poem. It typifies the struggle between being and non-being. The sea is described as corrupted by nothingness, which in turn provokes it to search for dimension in the earth. This search for consistency is frustrated, causing the sea to furiously attack the earth.

The poem begins by drawing together sea and nothingness:

Mer au bord du néant  
Qui se mêle au néant,

Pour mieux savoir le ciel,  
Les plages, les rochers,

Pour mieux les recevoir. (C, 143)

The never-ending movement of the waves, the sea's production of ephemeral horizontal and vertical forms, represents a continual lack of wholeness. A desire to possess the surrounding elements, to harmoniously combine earth, air and water, only draws the sea away from desired peace. Guillevic compares this sea to God:

Tu es pour quelque chose  
Dans la notion de Dieu,

Eau qui n'es plus de l'eau,  
Puissance dépourvue de mains et d'instruments,

Pesanteur sans emploi  
Pour qui le temps n'est pas. (C, 151)

Like God, the sea is the projection, the alienation of a passion into an abstract realm. It is not part of the sensuous, practical world that is the real for Guillevic. The descriptions of the sea's attributes combine being and non-being: power and weight yet without work or purpose. the sea is therefore passive, formless, invertebrate:

<<Désossée>>, <<dégraissée>>,  
Ce sont des voix.

<<Décolorée>>,  
<<Grise, grise, grise>>,  
C'est une autre voix.

Elles t'en veulent, ces voix,  
Elles sont dans le vent, dans le soleil,  
Dans ta couleur, dans ta masse. (C, 166)

The sea, in turn, desires dimension. It desires the  
structure of skeletal form, but is frustrated:

Tu rêves des rochers  
Pour t'en faire un squelette.

Continue, continue,  
Flatte-les de tes vagues

Et reste invertébrée. (C, 177)

The sea searches for a defined space where being can be  
gathered together, where the real can accumulate and draw  
away from preformal unreality. The waves appear to be  
desperately struggling to find the system of canals, pools  
and harbours where the earth encapsulates water:

Pour se faufiler  
Dans l'étroit canal  
Qui menait au port avant les bassins,

Elles se pressaient, tes vagues,  
Lors de la marée,  
Elles se bouscullaient.

Elles avaient besoin  
Que l'interminable  
Soit fini pour elles. (C, 200)

Reaching the pools, the sea finds a *lieu* where a moment of  
peace is experienced.

Avant que tu sois là,  
Collant à la saline,

Je t'ai vu bien souvent,  
Cernée dans les bassins,

Rendre au soleil couchant  
L'hommage des eaux calmes. (C, 147)

The earthly is therefore the ideal that the sea hopes to attain. When it finds the appropriate opening in the coast, a metamorphosis takes place:

D'abord presque pareille  
A celle du grand large,

De bassin en bassin.  
Ton eau devient épaisse

Et finit par nourrir  
Des espèces de vert

Comme font nos fontaines. (C, 146)

Thus the diffuseness of the sea is channelled and given consistency. Become earthly, it participates in the cycle of regeneration. No longer the undrinkable sea water separated, abstracted from matter, the sea has become like the sacred life-force, the fountain.

But such moments of dimension, of finally knowing and receiving the earth, are rare. If some waves make their way into the crevices of the coast, there remains an inexhaustible expanse of ocean. The sea is irredeemably inferior to the earth, which causes it to furiously attack the coast-line. The sea dreams of inverting its relationship with the earth:

On comprend bien  
Que ça t'obsède

D'être un jour dressée  
A la verticale  
Au-dessus des terres.

On comprend bien. (C, 177)

## 2) *The Sea and Humanity*

In the sea's relationship to the earth there is therefore ambivalence. The sea wants to find in absorption in matter the being which is denied it alone. At the same time, inferiority to the earth causes gestures of furious impotence. This ambivalence is reciprocated by the inhabitants of the earth. Humanity is both attracted to the sea and repelled by it, this refusal leading to conflict.

After the sea has entered the littoral crevices and changed into earth, the human inhabitants are unsatisfied, searching for residues of the sea:

Mais tu sais trop qu'on te préfère,  
Que ceux qui t'ont quittée

Te trouvent dans les blés,  
Te recherchent dans l'herbe,  
T'écoutent dans la pierre,  
Insaisissable. (C, 148)

An interpenetration of human and sea is observed:

Tu regardes la mer  
Et lui cherches des yeux.

Tu regardes des yeux  
Et tu y vois la mer. (C, 148)

There is therefore a spirit of the sea which is embedded in the human psyche: one element always relays back to the other. This does not mean that an equilibrium exists between man and sea, as I will show later.

The reality of man is not limited to the ocean, however. Man can turn his back to the sea and plant his feet on firm ground. The stone offered by the earth may interest the poet more than the pebble by the sea:

Pardonne-moi si le caillou  
Ramassé dans un coin de terre,

Même sur un sentier  
Piétiné,

Me parle plus  
Que tes galets, parfois. (C, 190-1)

The preference shown by the humans for the sea in its pure state does not mean a refusal of the earth. Man's rootedness in the earth, his telluric love, causes its preference to the sea:

Tu devrais être la première  
A comprendre et savoir  
Que l'on aime la terre,

Que l'on peut préférer  
Y vivre loin de toi. (C, 191)

If the sea is desired by the human inhabitants, it is also a source of terror. The sea is a nightmare weighing on the minds of the living:

A ruminer tes fonds  
Tu les surveilles mal,

Ou peut-être tu pousses  
Ces monstres qui pénètrent  
Dans le lieu de nos cauchemars. (C, 152)

The human settlements turn their back on the sea and listen:

Les gens y étaient comme des menhirs,  
Ils étaient là depuis longtemps.

Ils n'allaient pas regarder la mer,  
Ils écoutaient. (C, 150)

They listen to the winds that come from both the earth and the sea, and which are engaged in mortal combat:

De la mer aux menhirs,  
Des menhirs à la mer,

La même route avec deux vents contraires  
Et celui de la mer  
Plein du meurtre de l'autre. (C, 150)

Thus an identification between humanity and the sea becomes a brutal differentiation, a cosmic struggle. The prize is the wresting of presence from the preformal chaos of the

sea. The wind from inland is portrayed as a force in favour of stability:

Le vent vient de plus bas,  
Des dessous du pays.

Le vent est la pensée  
Du pays qui se pense  
A longueur de sa verticale.

Il vient le vérifier, l'éprouver, l'exhorter,  
A tenir comme il faut

Contre un néant diffus  
Tapi dans l'océan  
Qui décide à venir. (C, 159)

The wind here guards a stable space that stands out against the ever-present threat of non-being. Hence, this telluric celebration makes the earth sacred, the sea profane.

### *3) Dimensions of the Sacred*

The sacred manifests itself in *Carnac* in several ways. Both matter and man are described as struggling for dimension, transcending the preformal and chaotic. Guillevic puts emphasis on *pesanteur*, on the weight of matter that grounds a world. Woman is also celebrated as a hieratic figure offering access to the sacred, while the mysterious standing stones impose their presence on the poet's mindscape. Finally, the use of the sacred by Guillevic demonstrates an uneasy relationship with traditional religion.

Both matter and man are portrayed as struggling for transcendence. All parts of nature, however humble, struggle towards form:

A Carnac, l'odeur de la terre  
A quelque chose de pas reconnaissable.

C'est une odeur de terre  
Peut-être, mais passée  
A l'échelon de la géométrie.

Où le vent, le soleil, le sel,  
 L'iode, les ossements, l'eau douce des fontaines,  
 Les coquillages morts, les herbes, le purin,  
 La saxifrage, la pierre chauffée, les détritux,  
 Le linge encore mouillé, le goudron des barques,  
 Les étables, la chaux des murs, les figuiers,  
 Les vieux vêtements des gens, leurs paroles,  
 Et toujours le vent, le soleil, le sel,  
 L'humus un peu honteux, le goémon séché,

Tous ensemble et séparément luttent  
 Avec l'époque des menhirs

Pour être dimension. (C, 198)

Similarly, Guillevic contrasts the helpless, hopeless ocean  
 with man's potential for transcendence:

Tu ne changeras pas au cours des ans,  
 Même si tu en rêves à coups de vagues.

Mais pour moi d'autres jours  
 Pourraient venir de mon vivant. (C, 173)

Anticipated is the construction of a space where a  
 transfigured earth can be inhabited:

Ce sera comme un cercle  
 Qui se réveille droite,

Une équation montée  
 Dans l'ordre des degrés,

D'autres géométries  
 Pour vivre la lumière. (C, 174)

Alongside this theme of transcendence is the valorisation  
 of *pesanteur*, of the weight of matter which grounds a world.  
 The poet sees salvation in the cloaca which provides  
 stability:

Il y a dans les cours des fermes  
 Du purin qui ne s'en va pas

Et c'est pour leur donner  
 De l'épaisseur terrestre. (C, 168)

More grandly, the weight of rock in the form of gravestones  
 and dolmens provides stability in the face of death:

A Carnac, derrière la mer,  
 La mer nous touche et se respire  
 Jusque dans les figuiers.

Ils sont dans l'air,  
Les ossements.

Le cimetière et les dolmens  
Sont apaisants. (C, 148-9)

The church has also the value of *pesanteur*, hewn rock that  
resists the wind and sea:

Eglise de Carnac  
Qui est comme un rocher  
Que l'on aurait creusé

Et meublé de façon  
A n'y avoir plus peur. (C, 149)

The importance of rootedness in the earth is echoed by  
another image of the sacred, the fountain. The speaker  
remembers a fountain which continually reversed time. Linked  
to regeneration, it was in touch with the origin:

Entre le bourg et la plage,  
Il y avait sur la droite une fontaine

Qui n'en finissait pas  
De remonter le temps. (C, 153)

Such emphasis on the earthly flows into the manifestation  
of the sacred most prevalent in Guillevic's work, woman. In  
a series of quanta, the speaker predicts the arrival of a  
woman who overcomes division:

La fille qui viendrait  
Serait la mer aussi,  
La mer parmi la terre.

Le jour serait bonté,  
L'espace et nous complices.

Nous apprendrions  
A ne pas toujours partir. (C, 153-4)

In this imaginary situation, chaos gives way to the  
possession of space and its organisation as a composed  
world:

Présence jamais trop lourde  
De vous autour de nous  
A composer le monde,



Puisque le temps se tient  
Aux dimensions de notre avoir. (C, 154)

These manifestations of the sacred are, however, incomplete. The dimensions of the sacred space are on the building site: matter is still moving, man is still hoping. The place where the sacred seems to be in place is Carnac and its standing stones. In the opening chapter of this section, it was described how Guillevic looks back to a prehistoric time when everything was holy and how he anticipates a state of total holiness that the poet will play a vital role in constructing.

The circles of stones are already existing dimensions of the sacred. In them sky and earth are united:

Nulle part comme à Carnac  
Le ciel n'est à la terre  
Ne fait monde avec elle

Pour former comme un lieu  
Plutôt loin de tout  
Qui s'avance au-dessous du temps. (C, 159)

To use Eliade's terminology, there has been founded a world that stands out from profane time and space. The circle of stones becomes the centre of the world where the sky joins the redeemed earth:

Du milieu des menhirs  
Le monde a l'air

De partir de là,  
D'y revenir.

La lumière y est bien,  
Pardonne.

Le ciel  
A trouvé sa place. (C, 160)

Having described the dimensions of the sacred as they appear in the poem, it remains to discuss Guillevic's notion of the sacred in relation to traditional religion. In *Carnac*, the sacred is used, but within a profane

perspective, which is to say that transcendence is grounded in immanence. So many religious themes and images are in *Carnac*: the solar myth, the *Terra mater*, the fountain, the struggle for sacred space and time, redemption and reconciliation. But Guillevis combines this with a rejection of the transcendent deity. The sea is compared to God as an alienated, disembodied spirit. Similarly, woman is seen as offering the recuperation of the passion wasted on God:

Donne au moins ce qu'en toi  
Nous avons investi.

Pour remplacer ce Dieu  
Où nous t'avons jetée,

Nous avons besoin  
De trouver la fête. (C, 199-200)

The *fête* which, according to Mircea Eliade, was the return to the *illud tempus* when the Gods created the earth, will take place without God.

In conclusion, the dispersal of the sacred throughout the natural world of which the human is part translates the religious features of *Carnac* into a profane idiom.

#### 4) *The Impossible Equilibrium*

The image mentioned at the beginning of this chapter of an exchange between eyes and the sea does not mean the stable exchange of attributes that could be called equilibrium. Instead both man and sea are corrupted by a spirit of non-being that frustrates stable exchange. Despite moments of calm, the desire for dimension of man, earth and sea is thwarted and man and sea remain separate. The impossibility of equilibrium is shown in the poet's contradictory descriptions of the sea. Because of this, in *Carnac*, the

poet now inscribes himself in an alternating pattern of world and chaos.

The establishment of the sacred is a homecoming: from being lost and unhoused, we create a space in which we inhabit the world. In *Carnac*, this inhabitation is incomplete. Thus the fountain is not at peace with its environment:

Sur la route de la plage, la fontaine  
 Etait là comme venue d'ailleurs,  
 Mal habituée

--Ou c'était le reste. (C, 162)

A similar sense of strangeness is felt by another manifestation of the sacred, sunlight. The sun, like the sea, finds itself oppressed by limits:

Vous la fin de la terre  
 Et la fin de la mer,

Où le soleil enfin  
 Ne peut plus s'étaler,

Mais cogne, mer,  
 Comme tu fais.

Carnac is not presented as a place of peace. Settlements are dispersed, not rooted in the earth, smothered by an oppressive silence:

Fermes à l'écart, hameaux,  
 Dans vos pins,  
 Dans vos chemins,

Vous n'êtes pas tout à fait sûrs  
 De votre assise.

Le silence est obligatoire. (C 161)

If the rocks of the cemeteries, the dolmens and the church offered *pesanteur* in the face of death, death nevertheless persists. The breath of the living is insubstantial:

A Carnac d'autres vents  
 Font semblant d'apporter  
 Des souffles de vivants  
 Mais ne sont que passants. (C, 160)

Carnac is the site for a continual conflict between life and death:

Besoin d'un départ  
Marquant les hameaux et les fermes

Vers la vie, davantage de vie,  
Vers la mort.

Tremblement tous les jours  
Entre les deux. (C, 161-2)

Carnac is also an inhabitation that is disintegrating:

Autant que les maisons  
Les gens s'abandonnaient. (C, 189)

There are moments in the poem where an end to chaos appears to be reached. The will of the sea, for instance, momentarily subsides into calm:

Il y a des moments  
Où l'on peut s'endormir  
Même tout près de toi  
Sans te manquer d'égard.

Ce sont peut-être ceux  
Qu'un grand calme t'inflige,

Quand tu as fait tes comptes  
Et les a trouvés bons.

Il arrive à chacun,  
Même à toi, forcenée,  
D'être content de soi. (C, 179)

The sea accepts endless horizontal movement:

Calme, calme et contente  
D'avoir fait ton bilan.

Horizontale et l'acceptant,  
Le temps que tu savoures  
Les postes de l'actif. (C, 179)

For a moment, the *fête* is achieved. The landscape is infused with light and the violence of the wind subsides.

Inhabitation becomes possible:

Parfois sur une lande,  
Où l'on te voyait de loin,

C'était une fête  
De la lumière et du vent léger,  
Toute couleur presque évanouie.

L'étendue  
Ne guettait plus de proie.

L'horizontal s'acceptait,  
Durer devenait possible. (C, 205)

Occasionally, the sea, in the form of a wave, attains the attributes of the earth, verticality and greenness, in a moment of plenitude:

Il y a des moments  
Où l'on te trouve entière,  
Brutale d'être toi.

Là tu viens verticale et verte te dresser  
A toucher notre face.

Là tu nais en toi-même  
A chaque instant que nous faisons. (C, 202)

Such plenitude is, however, momentary in Carnac. The landscape erupts in fissures, inevitable differences and conflicts. The sea is condemned to never-ending oscillation between being and non-being. Lack of form is projected into eternity. The movement of the waves recurs continually:

Au moins tu sais, toi, océan,  
Qu'il est inutile  
De rêver ta fin. (C, 165)

The sea exists in a parallel relationship with the coast, which prevents any opening out onto the new:

Toujours les mêmes terres  
A caresser toujours.

Jamais un corps nouveau  
Pour t'essayer à lui. (C, 172)

Similarly, the sea exists in a state of interdependence with the landscape. A desire to overcome the sun is frustrated by the necessary relationship with the sun:

Contre le soleil  
Tu as voulu t'unir,

Mais avec quoi  
Sauf avec lui? (C, 173)

The sea hence becomes something whose "essence" is negativity: its being is necessarily to *not* be. When transformed into earth, the sea loses its essential nothingness:

Ce qu'aussi tu veux,  
C'est t'allonger jusqu'en les terres,  
C'est les pénétrer, c'est être avec l'herbe.

Tu fais des rivières,  
De vieux marais.

Mais là tu te perds  
En perdant ta masse

Et ce néant  
Qui te traverse. (C, 201-2)

In relation to the human, the sea is elusive, opaque, irredeemably objective. In two quanta, Guillevic evokes a separation of land and sea into subject and object, beholder and beheld. In the first of the quanta, the organic bond between land and sea is suggested as broken:

La terre et moins de sable,  
C'est vert et c'est épais.

C'est de ce pays-là  
Peut-être que la mer  
Était un oeil ouvert.

Ça se ressemble peu  
Tout un corps et son oeil. (C, 151)

In the other quantum, the life which emerges from the sea, grows eyes that create a division between land and ocean:

Avant nous  
Tu étais là,

Avant qu'apparussent  
Des choses timides

Qui allaient sans toi  
Qui t'abandonnaient,

Où poussaient des yeux. (C, 204)

A split takes place between the "subject" and "object" because the sea is opaque, has secrets which resist the

observer. The human race have their confidence in the  
victory of knowledge undermined by the lumpishness of the  
sea:

Encore une fois,  
Que faire avec toi,  
Nous qui pouvons?

Debout au soleil,  
Fiers de nos travaux,  
Toujours approchant d'un plus grand secret

Et toi un remords  
A n'en pas finir. (C, 206)

The sea is always exceeding the irradiating light of  
understanding:

Et du noir,  
Rien que du noir  
Ou à peu près,

A cette frange près pour la lumière,  
Tellement peu.

J'arrive mal  
A y penser. (C, 206)

The desire for knowledge of the sea draws the speaker to  
immerse himself in the sea. But no secret is revealed: there  
are surfaces upon surfaces, while in the dimensionless ocean  
the power of language is lost:

Rêvant toujours d'aller sur toi  
Jusqu'au large où l'on ne voit plus que toi,  
Rien de la terre,

Un jour  
Je l'ai pu.

Mais je n'ai trouvé que de la surface  
Où peut-être j'avançais,

Du volume indéterminé  
Où mes cris ne portaient pas. (C, 208)

The sea intimates an origin to man, but one which is  
elusive. Even immersed in the waves, there is simply  
tangential contact with an imprecise, transient idea:

On peut plonger en toi.

Tu l'acceptes très bien,  
Même tu le demandes.

Mais ce n'est que toucher  
Un passé légendaire  
Qui s'oublie dans ta masse

Dont tu paraiss absent. (C, 169)

The disruption of unity and the never-ending alterity of the ocean mentioned above seem to draw together man and the sea. This is the spirit of one of the quanta:

Nous n'avons de rivage, en vérité,  
Ni toi ni moi. (C, 157)

Both man and sea lack the desired dimension: they are both affected by chaos. But this is no facile summary of the theme of *Carnac*. Other statements are made about man and the sea which contradict this. For example:

Tu viens et tu vas  
Mais dans des limites

Fixées par une loi  
Qui n'est pas de toi.

Nous avons en commun  
L'expérience du mur. (C, 207)

Is this wall not an example of a *rivage*? Similarly contradictory is Guillevic's differentiation of man and sea:

Sois ici remerciée  
De n'être pas pareille à nous

Dont le rêve est toujours  
D'être réconciliés

Quand pourtant  
Ce n'est pas possible. (C, 197)

This surely contradicts the frequent theme in the poem of the sea's desire for union with its surroundings.

The process of fascination and terror, identification and differentiation has affected Guillevic's anthropomorphism: the sea is at one moment human, at another non-human. In one quantum, the sea stands above the concerns of mortals:



Mer sans vieillesse,  
 Sans plaie à réfermer,  
 Sans ventre apparemment. (C, 149)

In another quantum, the sea shares the poet's concern for death:

Ce qui fait que la morte est morte  
 Et moi vivant,

Ce qui fait que la morte  
 Se tient plus loin qu'auparavant,

Océan, tu te poses  
 Des questions de ce genre. (C, 156)

There is a flickering of human and non-human features in the sea, features identified but without constituting the human whole:

Sans corps,  
 Mais épaisse.

Sans ventre,  
 Mais molle.

Sans oreilles,  
 Mais parlant fort.

Sans peau,  
 Mais tremblante. (C, 181)

What sense can be made of this apparent inconsistency? Returning to the original identification, it can be said that man and sea are "sans rivages" because the latter sucks in all forms of human projection. It provides a bottomless pit for the imagination of the speaker. There is no dimension which determines or directs the attribution of meaning and form. This is the spirit of one quantum:

Infatigable, fatiguée--

Mais quelle épithète  
 Qui ne te conviendrait? (C, 186)

The sea is so vast that it sucks in contraries. the sea is remembered as a force of absorption:

(...) je parle de toi quand tu n'es que toi-même,  
 Sans pouvoir que d'absorber. (C, 165-6)

The sea is contrasted with woman, who hands over the unknown to man:

Femme, femme, au secours  
Contre le souvenir  
Enrôleur de la mer.

Mets près de moi  
Ton corps qui donne. (C, 199)

The sea "conscripts" the poet: it is a nagging problem that demands a response. The brief hope that there could be peace and a parting of the ways between man and sea is met with derision:

On ne se dit rien,  
On s'ignore, on va  
Chacun dans sa loi.

Tu veux qu'on essaye  
En feignant de croire  
Que ce soit possible. (C, 182-3)

Drawn back continually to the question of the sea, the answer remains elusive. Man is always on the threshold, always on the point of entering a new-found habitation, always denied rest:

On est à la porte,  
On a l'habitude,  
On ne s'y fait pas. (C, 175)

Such an awareness of radical alterity, of endless frustration of progress, can be seen as a new pessimism on the part of Guillevic. From the struggle towards dimension in the Stalinist period, Guillevic moves towards presenting history as brutal eternal recurrence:

L'insidieux est notre passé.  
Chargé sur nous de représailles.

Pourquoi faut-il que l'on t'y trouve,  
Océan, accumulation. (C, 172)

There is a positive side, however. Language becomes the means by which a chaotic universe can be inhabited, with

however much difficulty. He speaks to the sea while aware of its otherness:

Je te parle et je suis  
Obligé de le faire.

Je te parle et je fais  
Comme si quelquefois  
Tu m'entendais parfois. (C, 195)

The poet's "baptism" of the sea, which links earth and sea, does not create lasting unity, but relieves the poet:

Je te baptise  
Du goût de la pierre de Carnac,  
Du goût de la bruyère et de la coquille d'escargot,  
Du goût de l'humus un peu mouillé.  
(...)  
--C'est sans effet sur toi, oui.  
C'était pour moi. (C, 183-4)

The role of the word has therefore changed in this period of Guillevic's work. It is no longer at the service of a historical movement that inexorably advances towards Communism. With the severe disturbance of the links between nature, man and time, in a world of continual disorder, the poem has a more defensive, compensatory function. The following quantum can be read in this way:

Ecoute ce que fait  
La poudre en explosant.

Ecoute ce que fait  
Le fragile violon. (C, 157)

On the one hand, there is matter in the service of destruction, part of the "history of reprisals". On the other hand, from the *tremblement* of life/death, being/non-being, a delicate beauty can be found: this beauty can be found in poetry. The "music" of this poem is no longer the confident demagogy of the marching song; it is instead a reaction to ever-present chaos. There is no conclusive knowledge garnered at the end of *Carnac*. The exchange and stability of equilibrium are missing. Instead, there is

awareness of the definitive emptiness of the sea and of this poem as a creation without reciprocity:

Toi, ce creux  
Et définitif.

Moi qui rêvais  
De faire équilibre. (C, 209)

### 5) *Form*

The Guillevic of this third period strives for unity with the cosmos and retains a tempered utopianism. But in the wake of Stalinism, there is no form in which to translate fully and unproblematically this holism or utopian impulse. In Guillevic's long poems of this period, there are discontinuous and contradictory pulsions, while the collective narrative of *nous* takes its place as a declining orientation among the other orientations of the ruminating mind. The taste for contradiction found in the first period—to be contrasted with the structure of confrontation in the second—comes into play in which quanta play off one another.

In one quantum of *Carnac*, the speaker complains about the failure of his poem to adequately represent the sea:

Il me faudrait parler  
Aussi vague et confus  
Que rabâchent tes eaux

Et des éclats  
Pour ta colère,

Tes idées fixes  
Sous le soleil. (C, 200-1)

It can be argued as a qualification of this that the shifting, repetitive, incohesive, unprogressive style of

this long poem is very suitable to the elusive, formless and vast subject-matter.

*Carnac* is certainly a coherent text. It is framed by an opening quantum which introduces the main "characters" of the poem--sea, sky, earth--and ends on a quantum which summarises the failed project of the poet. The elements of the landscape are consistent with Carnac, and in turn this sense of a "region of identity" is strengthened by the poet's *je* and the sea's *toi* which convey an intimate relationship with the environment.

If such frame and horizon provide coherence, they do not provide stability. The process of attraction and repulsion described during this chapter is reflected by the orientation of the speaker. The addressee changes often, the shifters *tu* and *nous* occupied alternately by sea, woman, *je* plus lover, *je* plus humanity, *je* plus sea. The shift in the speaker's orientation towards the sea is reflected in changes of register. The attitude of the speaker shifts from conversational familiarity--"Ça ne te dit rien, n'est-ce pas?"--to the apostrophe, prenominal adjective and all: "Incernable océan".

In addition to these shifts in orientation, there are shifts in tense throughout the poem, ranging aspectually from the past historic intuition of origins to the brief certainty of the present tense. The present of address to the sea and future-oriented addresses to woman are interrupted by memories of the past. Such shifts correspond to the theme of the poem: a rumination without end in which a mind moves between elegy and hope and unanswerable questioning.

The result of this is that as a narrative, the poem only has brief moments of cohesion, provided by the subject-matter and the pronoun at the time: the poem may be split into roughly forty sequences on this basis. The lack of temporal and logical connectives makes the narrative an unprogressive one. The absence of such connectives as *puis*, *après*, *demain*, *maintenant*, or movement in tense from past to present to future as found in the Stalinist period rid the poem of any clear aim--instead, it is more cyclical, like the sea. There are moments of qualified insight or plenitude, time-segments scattered across an unspecified span:

*Quelquefois* tu mugis (153)

*Il arrive qu'un* pin (156)

*Parfois* tu étais/Un moment de moi (203)

Things become static: a motif like that of the menhirs does not develop towards an unravelling of its secret, but rather remains shrouded in mystery. In turn, to temporal uncertainty is added the notion of semblance, of a gap between perceiver and perceived:

d'autres vents/*Font semblant* d'apporter (160)

Appel *peut-être*/ A la musique (167)

*Vraisemblablement* (193)

The nature of the quanta varies: they may be anecdotal, interrogative or describe a detail. Within these quanta, the problematical relationship between the poet and the sea is reflected in the use of comparison. There is no pure use of metaphor, no fusion between one thing and the sea, but rather a bridge built by simile:

La mer *comme* un néant. (144)

*Comme font nos fontaines.* (146)

A comparison may be used critically. The implied simile of the body is both affirmed and denied:

Sans corps,  
Mais épaisse. (181)

Guillevic uses antithesis. He attempts to delimit and possess the sea by saying what it is not:

Pas délicate,  
Pas difficile,  
Pas assez femme.

Tu prends tout,  
Parfois tu rejettes. (C, 180-1)

If temporal and spatial uncertainty denies order, such incomplete comparisons add to this in a general dialectic of form/formlessness. This dialectic also appears in the polyphonic nature of some quanta. Voices come in and undermine a described state of affairs, for example:

--Ou c'était le reste. (C, 162)

On the level of prosody, regularity is disrupted. On page 174, the optimistic spatialisation conveyed with future tenses, parallelism and 6/6 couplets is followed by "Alors", then interrogative statements of different length and of conversational register. Phonetic patterning is also undermined, for example:

Douce, douce et caressante  
--Et c'est peut-être vrai. (C, 170)

Generally, on the level of prosody, there are extremes of reduction and extravagance. Nominal groups eliminate all "excess" words:

Ton père.  
Le silence.

In the baptism of the sea, however, there is a profusion of words:

Du goût du fer qui commence à rouiller,  
 Du goût d'une bouche et d'une langue avides, (C, 184)

Between such extremes there is equilibrium of construction  
 which conveys oscillation:

La mer comme un néant  
 Qui se voudrait la mer. (C, 144)

There may be changes in line length in *Carnac*, but the dominant form is the six-syllable couplet. In the third quantum of the poem (144), the insistent movement of the sea is conveyed by six lines of six-syllable length, with reflexivity of stress in the first couplet--2+4/4+2--reinforcing the oscillation between *mer* and *néant*.

### *Conclusion*

*Carnac* represents a shift from the political struggle found in Section 2 to life in the wake of the failure of Stalinism. What is striking about the poem is the paucity of references to what is usually associated with Carnac: ancient Celtic settlements. Instead, there is a move from direct concern with the fate of humanity to the confrontation between the human and the other. Significantly placed centre is the sea, which represents not burgeoning growth, but eternal recurrence.

The sea is the occasion for the new long poem of Guillevic. If *Carnac* had been on the people of Carnac, it could have been a long poem in the nationalist, epic mode, as Bretons have already practised (4). Instead, the sea becomes the occasion for an oscillation between world and chaos, form and formlessness, expressed in complexity of orientation, coherence but not progression, prosodic



instability and equilibrium. Such features will be further developed in the following long poems.

#### *References*

- 1) Mircea Eliade, *Le Sacré et le profane* (Paris, 1965), 32-33
- 2) *ibid.* 60
- 3) *ibid.* 77
- 4) See Jean Balcou and Yves Le Gallo, eds., *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne* (Paris, 1987)

## 3.4) EXPLICATION---"Chemin" (S, 9-16)

## CHEMIN

à André Frénaud

- 1) Auprès d'une eau trouvée  
Dans un ruisseau de mai,

La douceur était là,  
Qui manquerait.

\*

- 2) Vous étiez entre vous, buissons.  
C'était permis.

\*

- 3) Envers les puits la lune  
Avait de la pitié,

Mais entre les bois  
Les prés criaient

Et par la lumière de la lune  
Revenaient leurs cris.

\*

- 4) A la lumière de la lune,  
Quelle mesure demander?

\*

- 5) Bonnes à toucher:  
La feuille du noisetier,  
L'eau dans l'ornière,  
La mémoire de la violette.

\*

- 6) La courbe que l'oiseau  
Va suivre s'il s'envole.

\*

- 7) Quand la bruyère encore  
Entre soleil et soir  
Se gardait de bouger,

Le ramier  
Ne fut pas de trop.

\*

- 8) Une voix  
Peut sortir du bois.

Peut-être déjà

Voudrait-elle venir

Avec son corps.

\*

- 9) Entre la lune et les buissons  
Il y a une longue mémoire  
Et des souvenirs de corps qui s'aimèrent,  
  
Mais qui maintenant  
Sont devenus blancs.

\*

- 10) L'étang doit savoir  
Et sous la lumière de la lune  
Il en dort mal.

\*

- 11) Pierres froides pour les joues de l'homme.  
Pierres froides sous le cou de l'homme.

\*

- 12) Écoutant le vent, lui,  
Écoutant la lune,  
  
Écoutant vos dires,  
O buissons malgré l'étendue.

\*

- 13) L'eau coule plus bas  
Raconte pour qui sait entrer.  
  
Le froid  
Est ouvert toujours.

\*

- 14) Quoi lui échappe et fait  
Qu'il n'est pas d'ici?  
  
Exilé même  
Du pays des larmes.  
  
Espèce d'otage  
Designé, oublié.

\*

- 15) Que ses regards posés  
N'arrêtent pas les couleurs.

\*

- 16) Repliées ou qui se replieront  
Sur le temps qui leur est épais et donné,

Des bêtes.

Plus ou moins dormant---  
Mais dormir?

Douces au toucher, souvent,  
D'autres comme les rochers.

Toutes, quand elles regardent,  
Avec des yeux pires que l'étang.

\*

- 17) Cherche au bout du chemin  
Une vieille maison dans son peu de lumière.

Qu'elle résonne comme ayant la mesure  
Lorsque la lune est avec elle.

\*

- 18) Qu'il y ait dans cette maison  
Une femme sans emploi,

Ce regard  
Où le soleil a calmé la lune

Et des seins pour votre gloire.

\*

- 19) Pervenche, pervenche,  
Dis-le-lui, prédis-le-lui.

Que, cette fois,  
Ce n'est pas pour qu'on l'écarte.

\*

- 20) Toute la terre en parlant  
Viendrait à lui par le noisetier.  
Toute la terre en tremblant  
Viendrait à lui par ses yeux à elle.

\*

- 21) Alors il pourra boire, après,  
Et rire avec les gens du pays,

Peut-être sourire  
Au milieu des gens du pays,

Comme les corps trop blancs ne font plus,  
Comme font parfois les buissons,

Lorsque la lune a vaincu le vent  
Et qu'ils sont entre eux,

Tolérant le lièvre  
Et les rêves de quelques pierres.

\*

- 22) L'amour qu'il a lui donne  
Un autre aspect des fleurs.

\*

- 23) Souriant pour ceux du pays et pour lui  
Qui fut reçu,

Quand la lune accompagnait les buissons,  
Que dormaient plus ou moins les bêtes.

Dans leurs yeux pires que l'étang  
Apporter la douceur  
De l'eau du ruisseau de mai,

Et que les corps trop blancs  
N'aient plus si froids hors des buissons,

Que la lune s'enchanté à la courbe de l'oiseau,  
Que le répit s'étende aux prés.

\*

- 24) Le lendemain d'une longue journée de travail,  
Dans le matin de fraises de bois et d'alouettes,  
Le soleil plus pressé que lui,

Il savait ce que c'est  
Que bien dormir.

\*

- 25) Vers l'avant ni vers l'arrière  
Le chemin ne s'arrête là.

La lumière de la lune  
N'a pas abdiqué.

Pour les joues de l'homme  
La pierre encore peut être froide

Et sa bouche crier  
Comme font les prés.

### *Introduction*

"Chemin" is the first poem written after the second period, although published after *Carnac*. Alongside the latter, it introduces the reader to the preoccupations of the post-Stalin Guillevic. The title, "path", points to

the new features of form and content. There is tendency, desire, but also a sense of distance, exclusion, of a process which denies the stability of a definitive endpoint. "Chemin" introduces an image which will be taken up in subsequent works. It also introduces a style that is open-ended, which denies progression towards a definite endpoint, what can be called the style of the *poème-chemin*.

### 1) *The Problem of Homelessness*

If in a poem like "Soleil", man and nature were a dynamic unity, driven by the sun towards the Communist *bonheur*, in "Chemin" the landscape is that of a fallen world. Man and earth are unhoused, thrown into cold exteriority, pushing them to take the path of homecoming.

The opening quantum introduces the theme of being unhoused. Described in the past tense is peace. The water is "hard by" the speaker: it is in a relationship of friendship. Its qualities are those of softness and, "ruisseau de mai" implies, of warmth. The use of the indefinite article and of "trouvée" conveys a sense of the special occasion. But this time of strength and unity is punctured by "manquerait": the water is missing, the present is unhoused.

The second quantum continues this elegaic tone. In the past, the bushes were gathered together: they provide unity, enclosure, communication, rather than dispersal across the cold "étendue" which quantum 12 describes them as struggling against. Similarly, there is an end to

*pesanteur*. The heather, in quantum 7, refuses to move, roots itself to the spot and with that gesture assures the indispensability of the "ramier"--but this belongs to the past of elegy.

The landscape is marked by the denial of tenderness. It is dominated by coldness and violence. In quantum 11 the cold stones deny man the "douceur" described at the beginning: cold, hard, they provide neither rest for the neck nor a gesture of love on the cheeks. The condition of man is one thrown into coldness, an idea repeated in quantum 13--"Le froid/Est ouvert toujours".

Everywhere *there* is suffering. In quantum 4, the moonlight's pity for the well suggests sympathy among nature, but pity suggests the detached and ineffectual. This weak positive is cancelled out by the strong negative of the screams of the meadows sent back by the moon. Human tenderness is no more. In quantum 9, the bodies have faded to the cold whiteness of memory of the dead. The end of love is a nightmare weighing on the landscape. Contrasting with the "douceur" of the May streamwater is the restlessness of the pond in quantum 10.

The confidence of the previous period has evaporated: the subject is abandoned and threatened. In quantum 16, the beasts are creatures reminiscent of *Terraqué*. They contrast with the human. Folded on time, they create spherical closure, create the comfort of the home. Time is thick and given: it is something with substance which does not slip away. They are at home because of their fallen nature.

Denied warmth, tenderness, peace, Guillevic's man is the epitome of alienation. In quantum 14, the questioning of exile throws into relief his absurd condition. His homelessness is an extreme one: there is not even identity in sorrow; he is a "forgotten hostage", forgotten even by those from whom he was captured. The authors of his condition, "exilé, désigné", are unspecified, conveying the sense of a curse upon man. Compared with the collective consciousness of the second period, this is extreme melancholy.

In reaction to this condition, alienated man sets out on a path of homecoming. In quantum 4, the voice asks "A la lumière de la lune/Quelle mesure demander?" The moon is halflight, it is only the indirect presence of the sun, with the result that there is a vagueness of outline, a denial of the dimensions of the home. There is in turn a desire to find "mesure". "Mesure" can be understood in two senses: spatial order and "le chant". The home and the poem. The spatial "mesure" is first suggested in quantum 5. The rut cups the water, contains it, and with that gives it a quality which distinguishes it from the accursed pond water. In quantum 6, the bird's flight is not symbol of escape from a benighted landscape, but the curve that prefigures the sphere and hence the promised "demeure". In quantum 17, the man is urged to find "une vieille maison": "vieille", it contains the idyllic past to be revived; in a "peu de lumière" it is blessed but with difficulty. This house "resounds", it has found "mesure" in the moonlight: it is both form and musical harmony.



In other quanta there is a desire for "mesure" as the finding of a voice. In quantum 12, the man is listening after nature, an attitude of concern, waiting for communication. Quantum 13 contrasts the openness of the dictating cold to the hiddenness of the "recounting water". Like the May streamwater and the water in the rut, the water below is good water, which, by "recounting" returns the man to the past history of the lovers and the unified landscape. In quantum 20 a hypothetical reconciliation with the earth is seen as communication: the hazel tree is a cipher which "speaks" the earth.

The idea of the earth "speaking" is a typical example of Guillevic investing spirit in the material: the voice or "le chant" will not be disembodied. Thus, in quantum 8, there is hoped for the emergence of a voice from darkness and silence. But this voice is to come "avec son corps": communication is linked to the tenderness of touch.

Guillevic emphasises the sensuous nature of the man's homecoming. In quantum 5, pleasure is derived from touching things: the hazel, the water, and the violet which, as "memory", puts the man back in contact with the lost lover. Work is valorised in quantum 24. By contact with the earth, the grace of rest is achieved: the man wakes to a bright, dynamic natural scene.

Reconciliation with the earth is linked to love. As in *Terraqué* there is used the theme of the Quest. In quantum 18, the promised home is occupied by a woman who, "sans emploi", is thus arid, demanding fecundity. Unlike the

"regard" of the beasts, she has a cosmic "regard" that opposes the violence of the moonlight. Her breasts promise at once the sexual and the maternal. Considering that her eyes hand over the earth in quantum 20, she is a sacred *Terra mater*. Thus, the reconciled couple achieve "gloire", a religious term dragged down to earth. Love permits the handing over to man of previously separate things. In quantum 15, it is wished that the man's "regard" does not stop the colour of things: a certain uncluttered "regard" is necessary for the essential to be attained. The way to this "regard" is described in quantum 22: the love for the woman in turn gives the man a different, superior view of the flowers at hand.

Towards the end of the poem a hypothetical reconciliation and renewal are projected. The meeting of woman and earth in quantum 20 is followed in quantum 21 with the definite overcoming of solitude. The man is reconciled with the collective, "gens", and with a definite place, "pays". By the gesture of drinking, the man finds the water promised in other quanta and takes part in the collective *fête*. This achievement is reflected by the bushes: they "smile" because the wind that disrupted their unity has been defeated. In turn, their toleration of others conveys a new-found peace. And the "dreaming stones" evoke the standing stones of Carnac that tend towards, dream after the Gods.

The reconciliation continues in quantum 23. Previously dispersed elements return to invert the previously fallen state. The man is "reçu". In the landscape at large, the water of the streams replaces the water of the pond: the

good "regard" triumphs. Tenderness returns with the revival of the bodies. And the sought-after "mesure" appears with the curve of the bird's flight.

## *2) Unresolved Problems*

There are therefore clear oppositions in play in this poem centring around the problem of homelessness. Against a profane, chaotic present are opposed a past of unity, against bad water is good water, against aridness is the fertility of the union between man and woman. With this, it can be said that in "Chemin" are found the elements of the "romance" or "magical narrative". The possible "plot" of "Chemin" is the return of the sacred to the profane world, the return of the "Grail", the miraculous bringing back to life of the dead lovers.

However, if these are the oppositions in play in this poem, there is no annulment of contradictions. Instead, in accordance with the title, the poem ends on irresolution. The negative elements of the landscape--the pitiless moon, the coldness of stone, the screams of the meadows and of man--remain obstinately there.

A key to the understanding of this irresolution is the ambiguity of the theme of the moon. The moon has attached to it values that confuse the manichean distinctions elsewhere in the poem.

Moonlight is the trace of sunlight: it can be seen as both the memory/promise of light and the inhospitability of cold stone deflecting the sun's rays.

The ambiguity begins in quantum 3. The moon has pity for the well: it has sympathy for the other elements in the landscape. And yet, it merely sends back the screams of the meadow: it combines tendencies of solidarity and indifference.

In the following quantum, the negative value of the moon is reinforced. It is a halflight which denies "mesure". The question "Quelle mesure demander?" suggests that the moon is a ruler to whom it is necessary to ask for "mesure". This notion of authority is reinforced by the moon's "pity" and by the nostalgic description of the gathered bushes: "C'était permis". In the final quantum, the moon is described as not having "abdicated": the speaker implies that the moon is the embodiment of fallenness.

However, in other quanta, the moon is seen in a positive light. In quantum 9, the sympathy of the moon is repeated in its memory with the bushes of the dead lovers. This implies that the moon feels nostalgia too. In quantum 21, the moon overcomes the profane, defeating the wind and permitting the gathering of the bushes. The moon is suggested as being something that should be, as the final quantum implies, rejected in its totality. In quantum 17, the "vieille maison" achieves "mesure" in the presence of the moon. In quantum 18, the woman possesses "Ce regard/ Où le soleil a calmé la lune". In quantum 22, the moon "s'enchant à la courbe de l'oiseau". Thus, the moon, it is suggested, can participate in an ordered world.

It could be said that such contradictory features of the moon show incoherence in the thought of Guillevic. On the contrary, I believe that the ambiguity is a meaningful one which announces the theme of process in Guillevic's poetry.

Three quanta are suggestive:

Ce regard  
Où le soleil a calmé la lune. (18)

Que la lune s'enchanté à la courbe de l'oiseau.(22)

Quand la bruyère encore  
Entre soleil et soir  
Se gardait de bouger,

Le ramier  
Ne fut pas de trop. (7)

All three suggest the "crêpuscule". It is in the "crêpuscule" of morning and evening that moon and sun can be together in the sky. It is only then that the moon can be "calmed by the sun" or "enchanted" by the birds. It is in the interstice between bright sunlight of daytime and darkness of evening that the heather finds its *pesanteur*.

The "crêpuscule" conveys the new sacred of Guillevic. Instead of the religion of history, unfolding towards an eternity of "lendemains qui chantent", now salvation is found in the privileged moment to be re-enacted. The moon and the sun are apart for most of the time. Their union only comes briefly, in *cyclical* fashion.

### 3) The poème-chemin

The "romance" is the potential "plot" of "Chemin". But the overall structure of the poem denies its unfolding. By an examination of structure, deixis and modality I

will show how the structure emphasises *process* over *telos*.

One characteristic of this poem is the reprise of elements:

*ruisseau de mai* q.1, 23  
*près criaient* q.3, 25  
*noisetier* q.5, 20  
*courbe de l'oiseau* q.6, 23  
*corps blancs* q. 9, 21, 23  
*pierres froides* q.11, 25  
*bêtes qui dorment* q.16, 23  
*buissons* q. 2, 12, 21, 23  
*dormir* q.10, 16, 24  
*mesure* q.4, 13, 17, 23  
*couleur* q. 15, 22

The reprise of elements serves different functions. Firstly, it conveys reconciliation. In quantum 23, previously isolated elements are unified: the May stream and the eyes of beasts, the moon and birdflight, the bushes and bodies of lovers. The reprise expresses a logic unifying love and nature. Thus, the motifs woman and hazel, previously separate, are joined together in quantum 20. The problem of the "regard" in quantum 15 is responded to by the theme of love in quantum 22. A path of thought leads from problem to solution. The question, "quelle mesure?", of quantum 4 is replied to by the birdflight and by the home, to be "resolved" in quantum 23. At the same time, reprise is used to disrupt resolutions: the themes of the screaming meadows and of the cold stones are reiterated.

To emphasise the use of reprise, however, would exaggerate the ordered nature of the poem. The narrative structure denies reconciliation.

The text shuttles between past of harmony, chaotic time, and future reconciliation. The first three quanta

are cohesive parts of a descriptive system, describing a past of nostalgia (1 & 2) then of exile (3). In quanta 4-8 there is a shift to desire: for "mesure" (4), for tenderness (5, 6), for an idyllic past (7), and for the incarnate voice (8). This is disrupted by a dysphoric present, quanta 9-14, which describes a benighted landscape and the predicament of man, cohesively linked by the pronouns *il* and *lui*. Desire returns with the prayer in quantum 15, replied to by another dysphoric quantum, 16. After there is the longest utopian sequence: concerning woman (17,18) then the landscape (19-23). However, within quantum 23, tense subverts reconciliation. "Fut reçu" is ambiguous: does this mean a return of nostalgia for a distant golden age? This is backed up by the reiteration of desire with the form *que*+subjunctive. In quantum 23, the happiness of man is described in the past tense: it has already faded to a memory trace. This past is contrasted with the present of quantum 24, which makes as its conclusion openness.

This lack of clarity is reinforced by the confusing use of the imperfect tense. It is used to describe an idyllic period, quanta 1 and 2, but then the following quantum is used to describe dysphoria. With no clear distinction between a profane present and a sacred past, the idyll itself is adulterated.

Such stylistic "half-light" is reinforced by the modal verbs and adverbs. The frequent use of "pouvoir", "devoir", "peut-être", the conditional and subjunctive moods together convey difficulty, reliance on conjecture and faint hope.

The use of pronouns also conveys the notion of process. There is description of "l'homme", *il*, who is also addressed as *tu*. In addition, there is the address to "buissons" as *vous*, and "pervenche" as *tu*. But there is inconsistency. "L'homme" as character only appears in quantum 11. The problem arises of the status of the voice in the poem. The voice is "l'homme": in quanta 5 and 6 there is the same eroticism that is later embodied by "l'homme". If man is described as listening after nature, this is precisely what the voice does when describing the screams of the bushes. "Man" occupies both the "interior" of the voice and the "exterior" of "l'homme" object of exhortations. By this, Guillevic is speaking for the human condition: *je* may be too personal. In turn, the separation of voice and "l'homme" conveys the difficulty of the path: the voice is a "superego" or spiritual leader prescribing exemplary conduct. "Man" is revealed as an unstable construct, something to be *willed*.

The poem combines continuity and discontinuity. There is reprise of elements, creating coherence. There is sometimes cohesion by use of syntax and pronouns. This continuity is firstly disrupted by tense and contrapuntal, "negative" quanta. Discontinuity is also created by the splitting of the poem into twenty-four different "bits", some fleeting and notative, e.g. quantum 2, or more ambitious, gathering material, e.g. quantum 23. All correspond to surges of thought: insights and desires. Together they form an archipelago of quanta, or better, they are stations along the path. They cohere but have their own formal autonomy, which is to be



explicated. There can be identified such features as use of contrast, incantatory repetition, and phonetic patterning.

In quantum one, the lines are broken up in a way which conforms to grammaticality. They also create two groups that separate the element--water--and then the emotional investment in it--"tendresse/exil". The final line disrupts the past idyll by its separation by a comma and by the departure from the hexasyllabic pattern of the previous three lines. Alongside this use of *contrast*, there is phonetic patterning which creates coherence: "eau/ruisseau", "mai/manquerait", "douceur/manquerait".

Line-length is variable throughout the poem. In the third quantum there is grammatical splitting but uneven stress: 4+2/2+4//2+3/4//5+4/3+2. In the fifth quantum, however, there is a rough variation of 4/8. Here, grammatical repetition creates both "metaphorical" unity between the elements and an insistent tone. The nominal syntax conveys stripped-down immediacy.

Prosody is used meaningfully in quantum 6. The 2+4/2+4 equivalence of the lines, plus the phonetic echoing of [s] and [o], convey both the autonomy of the quantum and the perfection of the bird designing the curve. Similarly, in quantum 7, the quasi-equivalence of the three lines--4+2/4+2/3+3--combines with phonetic repetition of [s] and [R] to convey immobility.

Other quanta convey uncertainty at the level of structure. In quantum 8, the use of pauses combines with the modals of possibility. Separating sentences and splitting phrases, there is conveyed the possible

tentative emergence of the voice "avec son corps". In quantum 9, the splitting into two groups reinforces the adversative "mais". The contrast has added to it the syllabic difference and unity of the final two lines syllabically--5/5-- and phonetically--nasal rhyme and [m].

That is, however, one of the rare rhymes, traditionally understood, in the poem. Guillevic instead uses grammatical rhymes and prosodic equivalences to create an incantatory style. Thus, in quantum 11, the repetition of the form and the phonetic similarity of "pour/joue" and "sous/cou" insist on the theme of fallenness of man. In the following quantum 12, the repetition of "Ecoutant" conveys a similar insistent desire for redemption.

In quantum 20, the repetition of forms and words, the rhyme of "parlant/tremblant" give incantatory force to the prayer. The repetition of "Toute la terre" emphasises the promised totality, while the equivalence of form creates an equivalence of nature and the woman, something semantically reinforced by the transferral of "parlant" from the woman to the "inanimate" hazel tree. Similarly, in quantum 21, alongside the repetition of "gens du pays" and "comme", there is a long sentence which half and half links the human--*il*--and the non-human--"buissons". Finally, in quantum 23, the repetition of *que* + subjunctive continues the religious tone of the poem.

Compared with *Poésie nationale*, Guillevic has apparently collapsed into disorder. There are no regular rhymes, the verse-length varies considerably--2, 3, 4, 5,

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 syllable lines are to be found in "Chemin". But Guillevic, as I have tried to show, has not abandoned the possibilities offered by extra structure, the "materiality of language". Guillevic slips into order at will. There are different formal configurations to help explain different directions of thought: prosody, too, becomes part of a process.

### *Conclusion*

- In the previous period, Guillevic adhered to a rigid system of thought and placed his art at the disposal of a political hierarchy, that of the Party. His role was the reproduction of certainty, which culminated in the writing of committed Communist sonnets. "Chemin" expresses the breakup of the certainties of a closed system. While the desire for unity remains, the themes of the path and of homelessness reflect the emergence of gaps and fissures in Guillevic's world. The adoption of an open-ended form shows the deferral of the absolute end to history promised by the Communist narrative.

### 3.5) *LES NOCES*, ECOLOGY AND *LE SACRE SANS DIEU*

#### *Introduction*

With their emphasis on the defeat of order, on future uncertainty and on eternal recurrence, *Carnac* and "Chemin" express negative aspects of Guillevic's world-view. But the poet's optimism has not evaporated. In shorter poems, found in the collections *Sphère*, *Avec* and *Encoches*, Guillevic puts forward a notion of ecological harmony with nature, and expands his ambivalent attitude towards the sacred.

#### 1) *Les noces*

The desire for unity in Guillevic's work is not abstract or "spiritual": it is concrete and physical. The harmony that elements tend towards is a sensuous one, which Guillevic calls *les noces*. Man is portrayed as implicated in nature, and both are intermingled by a universal eros. For this reason, Guillevic emphasises the importance of loving the earth.

Guillevic draws the self out of isolation. The "subject" does not haughtily stand above the "object": instead, it is drawn towards the latter, finds its *raison d'être* in it. Thus, in "Habitations", experience of the self is a series of sojourns in the other:

J'ai vécu dans la fleur.  
J'y ai vu le soleil  
Venir s'occuper d'elle  
Et l'inciter longtemps  
À tenter ses frontières.

J'ai vécu dans des fruits  
Qui rêvaient de durer.

J'ai vécu dans des yeux  
Qui pensaient à sourire. (S, 57)

If man is therefore implicated, rooted in matter, both are animated by a desire for sensual unity. The desire for order is at the same time a sensuous interaction with the other: mind and body are resolved together. Love between humans is linked with a universal desire for touch, intimate union in the homecoming. This is expressed in "Ta main". The hand, firstly, moves outwards in order to be self-present:

Toutes les mains  
Sont aventure,  
  
Partent pour toucher,  
Se savoir alors,  
Se résumer. (S, 56)

The notion "resume" conveys the idea of finding wholeness, durability and enclosure. It thus connects the human with the rock's desire to ground itself amidst chaos:

Dans toutes les mains  
Gronde la fureur  
Qui permet aux rocs  
De tenir encore. (S, 56)

Guillevic's universal perspective thus joins the private and small human hand with a cosmic principle. In the final verses of the poem, the will of the earth is expressed instantaneously by a gesture of love between man and woman:

Toutes les mains ruminent  
L'histoire de la terre,  
Tremblent de cette histoire.  
  
Parmi ces mains, la tienne  
Emerge de l'histoire  
Et se souvient de moi. (S, 56)

With such a confusion of human and material, sexuality is extended to man's relationship with the earth. Guillevic revives the myth of the *Terra mater*. In "Mère" (S, 71), the female figure resumes the notions of fertility, depth and

*pesanteur*. In "Cerisier" (A, 32), the cherry-tree, dressed in brilliant white, is available for a possible marriage.

As Jean Tortel points out in his study of Guillevic, there is an opposition in his work between *violence* and *tendresse*. Guillevic wants the victory of the latter over the former: man must learn to love the earth. Thus, in "Maudire", the subject manages to overcome feelings of *anomie*. On his itinerary, he crosses into a new state of awareness:

Cherchant mon chemin  
Vers le bord du temps

Ou pour le longer  
Ou pour le quitter,

Quelquefois j'ai cru  
L'avoir traversé

Et plus rien, personne,  
Je ne maudissais. (S, 66)

With these revelations, he has a definite goal in life, a path that goes beyond any negative sentiment:

Maintenant je vais  
Plutôt vers le centre.

J'ai trop à savoir  
Et maudire est loin. (S, 66)

*Les noces* involve, therefore, acts of love between man and matter. As was seen in "Rites", in *Terraqué*, a gesture of tenderness and respect towards even the humblest element of nature--for instance, a stone or a pigeon--brought *raison d'être* to both "subject" and "object". This is expressed again in the poem "Tenir", which by its title combines the ideas of touch and of founding a world. The holding of things creates a space where unity is found:

Tout ce qu'on a tenu  
Dans ses mains réunies:

Le caillou, l'herbe sèche,

L'insecte qui vivra,

Pour leur parler un peu,  
Pour donner amitié.

A soi-même, à cela  
Qu'on avait dans les paumes,

Que l'on voulait garder  
Pour s'en aller ensemble

Au long de ce moment  
Qui n'en finissait pas. (S, 67)

This idea of the erotic union between man and earth is  
summed up in one quantum near the end of "En cause":

Noces pour la lumière,  
Pour le noir caché.

La terre pour la fête  
Tremble de trop donner

Tout se touche et s'affine,  
Arrive dans le chant.

L'étendue se rassemble  
Autour de notre vœu.

La lumière est donnée  
Pour écouter le chant.

Merci pour nos journées  
Qui ont la dimension

De la terre livrée  
Aux profondeurs des noces. (S, 137)

This is a picture of the surrender of the earth, but in an  
erotic, not a violent sense. All elements are handed over,  
and these elements are bound together in the harmonious  
whole of *le chant*. Profane time and space have given way to  
the *fête*, where an erotic unveiling and penetration of the  
earth takes place.

## 2) Ecological Harmony

The notion of *les noces* shows elements of the universe moving out of chaos towards harmony. Celebrating this harmony, Guillevic emphasises the need for man to work with the grain of things.

The harmonious whole is often described as *le chant*. In *le chant*, the elements of the earth are woven together aesthetically. In "Variations sur un jour d'été", for example, the Summer day in which division disappears is described thus:

On parlerait d'un air,  
Du chant, d'une chanson  
  
Où le silence aurait  
Posé ses fondations. (S, 83)

Birdsong represents harmony in two of Guillevic's poems. In "En cause", the blackbird loses *le chant* in a profane, chaotic space:

Le merle aussi  
Peut avoir froid.  
  
Il n'est plus qu'un oiseau  
Conduit par son attente.  
  
Il erre comme un autre,  
Il a perdu le centre.  
  
Quand le chant n'est plus là,  
L'espace est sans passion. (S, 125)

Conversely, in "Temple du merle", the bird's breaking into song communicates the ascending movement of the earth towards unity:

Comme ça monte quand il chante!  
  
Comme on arrive de plus près!  
  
Il sait dire ce que ça fait  
L'herbe qui monte, le ruisseau,



La primevère,

Ce qui fait  
Que c'est lui qui chante. (*En*, 36)

Man contributes to the harmony by engaging sensuously with what is present at hand, transforming nature in respect of the ecology. When extolling the virtues of work, Guillevic does not write paeans to the electrification of the Soviet union. Instead, the notion of *les noces*, of complementarity, is behind the technology he recommends.

The poem "Recette" expresses the importance of *working with the grain of matter*:

Prenez un toit de vieilles tuiles  
Un peu après midi.

Placez tout à côté  
Un tilleul déjà grand  
Remué par le vent,

Mettez au-dessus d'eux  
Un ciel de bleu, lavé  
Par des nuages blancs.

Laissez-les faire.  
Regardez-les. (*A*, 39)

This combines creation and conservation. Actively, the elements are brought together, but then there is a retreat in an attitude of respect: there is brought forth what is already inherent in the surroundings.

Work is seen by Guillevic as an essential part of man's harmonious relationship with nature. The wielding of the tool in the transformation of matter brings happiness. In "Un bahut", there is a combination of attack and respect:

Je t'ai ciré,  
Je t'ai frotté,

J'ai pris plaisir  
A te donner ma peine,

A sentir mon pouvoir  
Sur ton gros bois de chêne.

Presque tu ronronnais  
Sur ton linge et ton creux.

Je te regarde maintenant.  
Je me sens net. (S, 35)

Here pleasure and power are derived, but by working with the grain of the material at hand: the worker *hands over* his labour to it. The work is a gesture of friendship: the oak purrs like a cat under a caress, while it is with the sight of the "object" that the subject finds a clear identity. The picture is completed by the figure of the oak cupboard: man and matter have combined to create a place of *pesanteur*, solidity and containment.

The notion of working with the grain, of both creating and conserving, is most frequent in the images of working the land. The working of the land includes activity, but in accordance with the laws of nature. This is expressed in "En cause":

Terre qui nous a faits  
Ces errants que tu portes,

Incertains du local,  
Incertains du parcours,

Pour savoir qui nous sommes,  
Nous essayons le chant.

Et pour aller plus vite  
Que ne grimpe la peur,

Cruels, nous t'imposons  
Des lois qui sont tes lois,

Cruels et déchirés  
Que ce soit du dehors. (S, 138)

The humans do not know who they are or where they are. In order to find self-knowledge, and to attain the harmony that is *le chant*, there is no act of revenge against the earth that engendered them. Instead, the fiction of a struggle for dominance between man and nature, between subject and

object, gives way to harmonious exploitation of the laws of nature.

This homecoming is further described in "En cause". In cooking, the itinerary in a world *en cause* gives way to desired dimension:

En revenant des longs parcours,  
De la campagne interrogeante,

La soupe affectueuse,  
Les mets intelligents

Etablissaient avec la terre  
Des rapports à notre mesure. (S, 123)

Here Guillevic draws intelligence from the realm of the abstract to that of the concrete everyday. Happiness is found by understanding and working in complicity with the earth. To eat food is at the same time to thank the laws of the earth:

La terre, notre assise,  
Moins fragile que nous,

Qui nous aura permis  
Les tablées fraternelles

Où nous avons goûté  
Aux raisons de la terre. (S, 123)

In working the earth, peace arrives. This is described in

"Elégie de la Forêt Sainte-Croix":

Le ronron d'un tracteur  
Accompagne en silence  
Le silence des champs.

Tout le travail se fait  
Sous terre et sur le sol,

Par l'herbe, les racines,  
Par les graines, par l'eau,  
Par la charrue, la herse.

Pour donner aux journées  
Leurs contenus de vie. (A, 161)

This is an image not of techno-fascist exploitation, but of technology of responsibility. There is complicity between

the tractor and the fields: both are harmoniously silent, while the *ronron* suggests contentment and lack of urgency. Both are united in work: combined are surface and depth, the tools and the elements, intermingled by the "green fuse".

### 3) Le sacré sans Dieu

This notion of working in harmony with nature leads into the notion of holiness without God. The essences of the sacred--reconciliation, revelation, respect--are not deferred into a transcendental, spiritual realm. Instead, they come into being in man's sensuous, practical relationship with the world. Guillevic places the sacred in the here and now, and rejects any transcendent deity.

The sacred is placed in the here and now. In "En cause", eternity is no paradise lost to earth; it is there to be created by *savoir*:

L'éternité  
Ne fut jamais perdue.

Ce qui nous a manqué  
Fut plutôt de savoir

La traduire en journées,  
En ciels, en paysages,

En paroles pour d'autres,  
En gestes vérifiables.

Mais la garder pour nous  
N'était pas difficile

Et les moments étaient présents  
Où nous paraissait clair  
Que nous étions l'éternité. (S, 124-5)

The sacred can therefore become present to mortals in the here and now. It is translated into the concrete of the landscape and into the community of *parole*. And its foundation is science: the revelation of laws and progress

by verifiability. This translation of the sacred into the immanent is repeated in "Elégie de la Forêt Sainte-Croix". The farmyard is likened to a cathedral, open to the sky, which moves towards unity in the face of chaos:

Au seuil des cours de ferme,  
Je suis resté parfois  
Comme à l'entrée des cathédrales,

Porté par un volume  
Qui s'épousait lui-même,  
Qui s'épuisait à se trouver.

Cependant le dehors,  
En ordre dispersé,  
Essayait de battre sur lui,

Se haussait jusqu'à lui,  
L'affrontait, le niait,  
S'inclinait pour le consacrer.

Et le ciel de la plaine  
En haut des bâtiments  
Était le vitrail et tremblait. (A, 164)

It follows from this that the desire for *les noces*, for harmony between man and nature, is a desire for this sacred. The irruption of chaos provokes an attempt to found a world. Translated into the immanent is the opposition between sacred and profane. The hope of Guillevic is for the reconstitution of the primeval state of "total holiness". This is the message of the poem "Ouverture", which retains the discourse of promise to express the poet's urge for transcendence:

Quand chacun de tes jours  
Te sera sacré,

Quand chacune de tes heures  
Te sera sacrée,

Quand chacun de tes instants  
Te sera sacré,

Quand la terre et toi,  
L'espace avec toi  
Porterez le sacré  
Au long de vos jours,

Alors tu seras  
 Dans le champ de gloire. (S, 62)

In his itinerary, Guillevic searches for sacred space and time. An example of this is described in "Caillou":

Viens encore une fois  
 Te consacrer caillou

Sur la table dans la lumière  
 Qui te convient,

Regardons-nous  
 Comme si c'était  
 Pour ne jamais finir.

Nous aurons mis dans l'air  
 De la lenteur qui restera. (En, 28)

This shows the complicity with being that is the essence of Guillevic's *sacré sans Dieu*. The speaker calls upon the stone, but it is not a call in the sense of an order; instead, it is an invitation. The table turned altar, infused with the light, suits the stone: it is *at home*. On this sacred space, an exchange takes place between subject and object. Both become fused in an instant that stands forth from the busy blindness of everyday existence: time becomes slow, like the natural cycle, and promises to endure for eternity.

Guillevic is using the elements of religion--chapels, cathedrals, altars--but is translating them into his materialist idiom. The division of sacred/profane is shifted from the axis heaven/earth to the axis world/chaos. The earthly or "profane" becomes the site for the holy, while the non-holy becomes division, alienation and oppression. Guillevic's "profaning" of the sacred, his dissolving transcendence into immanence, causes a self-conscious attempt to reject established religion.

Thus, in the collection *Sphère*, soon after the promise of total holiness in "Ouverture", there is the poem "Soir". The poem begins with a rejection of deference to a transcendental deity:

Ce soir non plus  
Pas de prière à faire  
A la figure sans visage.

Pas de vénération  
Ni de supplication.  
Pas de reconnaissance  
Pour le fait d'être là. (S, 64)

The "être là" is essential: thrown as we are into the world, there is no point in believing in an "elsewhere". There must be active engagement with what is present at hand; the self must take upon itself its own being. Thus, agency moves from the divine to the human. Chaos is not to be fought by God, but by the human community:

Même si l'extérieur  
Quittait sa consistance,  
Abaissait sa rigueur

Et si nous attaquaient  
La distance et la perte,  
Il n'y a de recours  
Dans rien d'autre; la peur  
Nous devons la traiter. (S, 64-5)

Similarly, in "En cause", the sacred space is returned to the people:

S'il y a temple,  
Nous sommes le temple. (S, 137)

The problem with God for Guillevic is that he is disembodied: he is a hypostasised consciousness that escapes the erotic desire driving man and nature. It is by the "physical" activities of love, eating and work that the sacred is found. This preference of a "profane" sacred is summed up in "Elégie de la Forêt Sainte-Croix":

Pas recueilli  
De résine du firmament.  
Pas bu de lait d'étoiles.

Pas d'ascension. (A, 175)

### *Conclusion*

In these shorter poems, there is an equalisation of man's and nature's relationship to one another. In the first section, man was frequently inferior to nature. In the second section, man triumphed over nature. Now, they are partners. But this does not mean that peace has been definitely achieved. Both man and things are struggling to escape a chaotic situation to achieve a sacred unity in the here and now. With this, Guillevic emphasises ethical behaviour by man missing from the previous section.



### 3.6) *Ville, Paroi, Inclus*--FROM PROGRESS TO POETRY

#### *Introduction*

These ruminations on the themes of the city, otherness and poetry demonstrate, in form and content, the development of Guillevic's world view. In *Ville*, there is disappointment with humanity. In *Paroi*, there is rejected the dream of a definitive end to history. And in *Inclus*, serenity is gained in the practice of poetry. There is a move from the humanist dream of progress to an aesthetic solution to the problems of existence. In this chapter, I will firstly outline the content of each poem, then analyse their formal features.

#### I) *Ville*

In this poem is an unresolved tension between the citizen and the city and between non-human nature and the city. After the complicity between man and nature in Section 3, there is now disappointment with humanity. Guillevic is undeniably humanist in this poem, but his enthusiasm is attenuated, suggesting private solutions. The city is described as an incomplete body which denies the natural. The natural is asserted by the human and non-human in various ways. However, the body remains incomplete, with implications for humanity.

##### 1) *The City as an Incomplete Body*

The city is an environment created by humans, but it often lapses into the inhuman. It is supposedly the foundation of a world--the city is a frequent image of the *axis mundi*--but it turns to chaos. In *Ville*, Guillevic explores this paradox in order to recuperate a city which has become alienated from its inhabitants and hence from itself. The city is portrayed as a frequently hostile environment which combines tendencies of order and disorder. The city both suggests and denies the human.

Guillevic's city is a frequently hostile environment. Far from being a home, it is instead an alien, occupying force. *Ville* begins with the violent entry of the urban:

Il y avait une lueur un peu rouge  
Qui pénétrait par la fenêtre dans la chambre  
Où l'on pouvait se passer d'elle.

C'était probablement la ville, cette lueur,  
Et même le fleuve s'y trouvait,

Qui n'avait pas assez de place où il était  
Et qui venait avec le reste  
Nous relancer dans notre nuit. (V, 9)

Thus, the comfort of the home gives way to the formlessness of "lueur" and "fleuve". The waking reminder of the city's presence is paradoxically the return of the night-time of urban existence.

Guillevic's city is a combination of order and disorder. Simultaneously, the city wishes to become a coherent subject, a whole body; while another tendency pushes towards fragmentation. The city offers both place and displacement:

Et nous qui l'habitons,  
Nous devons la subir

Qui se voit tous les jours  
En train de se quitter

Et veut pourtant rester  
Lumière sur les lieux

Qu'elle abandonnerait  
Pour le noir et le vague. (V, 13)

The city is in a struggle against its own formal decadence.

The city has fallen from a state of circular peace:

Ils étaient nets,  
Autrefois, tes contours,  
  
Presque autant qu'un cercle  
De livre d'école. (V, 46)

From this state of childhood innocence, the city has passed to a state of dispersal where the announcement of its presence is lost:

Maintenant, c'est du marcottage  
A la manière des fraisiers,  
  
Si bien qu'on ne sait plus  
Où tu viens t'annoncer. (V, 46)

This frustration of order leads Guillevic to the image of the spiral:

Spirale cependant, puisque la ville cherche  
A se réunir, à se rassembler,  
A n'être plus qu'un point  
Où trouver sa puissance.  
  
--Et il lui faut aussi  
Faire le mouvement  
Exactement inverse,  
En même temps. (V, 47)

The city is both moving towards the centre, and thus stability, but is also leaving itself, dispersing.

Guillevic's urban environment is an incomplete body. It has a tendency towards the complex unity of the body, but also disrupts such organic unity.

Body images are frequent in Guillevic's interrogation of the city, but the city's relationship to them is problematic: it both suggests and denies the human. Thus, the city makes the poet think of blood:

Coagulée, la ville,  
Coagulante aussi.  
Coagulée, coagulante.

A tel point que le mot  
Même d'hémoglobine  
Me fait penser à toi. (V, 20)

Blood could suggest the passage of the life-force through the complex unity of the city. But in the city the circulation is blocked: the traffic between the different points is jammed. Coagulating, the city becomes a wound, with connotations of death rather than life.

In one quantum, a positive body image is used to describe the city. The sky is likened to the membrane around the "intestines" of the city. It has the appearance of comfort and protection:

Il n'y a pas de pèritoine  
Autour de cet intestin,  
  
Mais comme un tissu,  
A peine velouté,  
  
Un peu plus haut que les bâtiments,  
Parfois juste à hauteur des toits  
Et les caressant,  
  
Pour pouvoir tenir. (V, 57)

The completion of the urban body is hardly sealed, however. The all-important verb *tenir*, to hold and hold fast, is projected into the realm of possibility. The untroubled assimilation of matter by the urban "intestines" is not secured. This is expressed in another quantum:

On est discret chez toi  
Sur les champs d'épandage,  
  
Sur tout le processus  
De l'assimilation. (V, 58)

The sewage works at the edge of the city exemplifies the filtration and recycling of waste matter: it is an *organic* process. And yet, "on", the citizens, are "discret": they are reserved, discontinuous, excluded from the process of assimilation that would be the complete urban body.

## 2) *The City Against Nature*

In the previous chapter, I described how Guillevic presents good technology as agriculture and artisanal production: the pre-capitalist mode. This has negative implications for the city. The origin of capital, the place of stock exchanges, factories and offices, constructed on the back of a subjugated countryside, the city is a denial of the natural. The city is portrayed as interfering with the natural cycle and as dehumanising through exploitation. Nevertheless, the poet gains glimpses of a repressed nature that threatens the urban settlement.

The city is pitted against the earth:

A peine de la terre,

Ce sol que l'on remue  
Sous les revêtements  
Des trottoirs, des chaussées.

Terre aussitôt privée du repli de silence  
Que les champs labourés savent garder longtemps.

Pas rassemblé sur soi,  
Sur rien d'autre non plus.

Que l'on n'a pas envie  
De tenir dans la main.

Hors du circuit de l'eau  
Du circuit de l'attente. (V, 28)

The earth that was the foundation of the whole is separated both from the rest of existence and from itself. It is denied harmony: peace ("silence"), durability ("longtemps"), and homeliness ("repli"). There is no gathering, only dispersal: it is denied the gesture of affection and complementarity that was the theme of "Tenir". Cased in steel and stone, the earth beneath the city is denied the

rain. Just as the city's arteries are coagulated, so the currents of water, the "blood" of the earth, are inhibited: the "circuit de l'attente" that is the natural cycle is disturbed.

Guillevic contrasts the urban and natural circuits. In one quantum (V, 50), the circuit of pipes channelling water in the city denies the water communication with the "circuit de l'attente", with the water's subsequent cursing of man. Guillevic contrasts the organic with the mechanical. The "tremblement" running through nature is replaced in the city by a "battement":

Je ne vois pas sur la ville  
Ce tremblement

Qui est sur la mer,  
Qui est sur les champs,  
Où il devient le cri des mouettes,  
L'ombellifère.

Je vois sur la ville  
Comme un battement. (V, 63)

The relationship between the city and the countryside is in turn antagonistic. The forests around the city, what is called the "green belt", are described as fitting Guillevic's ideal of peace and durability. And yet, the city threatens to break its confines and profane them:

C'est durable lenteur,  
C'est durable silence,  
Vécus sur les confins  
De la pierre et du noir.

A moins que ton venin,  
Ville, n'aille là-bas,  
Ton espèce d'espoir. (V, 95)

The city denies nature because it is a place of exploitation. In the city, everything is turned into calculations, figures which penetrate even the bodies of the citizens:

Chiffres, chiffres, la ville  
 Est quelque chose qui se compte, qui recompte,  
 Qui fait des comptes.

Chaque fenêtre éclairée dans la nuit  
 Est unité de quoi?

Fraction de celle des lampadaires?

Peu de ces chiffres sont écrits.  
 Les autres creusent des couloirs  
 A travers nous. (V, 140)

If there is a "circuit" in the city, it is the circulation of capital. The city becomes the expression of the abstract units of money which have replaced the human and the natural. It becomes thus a place of class differences and class struggles. The antagonistic figures of profits and salary are "translated" into the urban landscape:

Parmi les chiffres que la ville  
 Crache ou rumine,

Il y en a qui ont le don particulier  
 De colorer les rues plus que les autres:

Chiffres des profits,  
 Ceux des salaires.

Les courbes sont traduites  
 En rouge, en gris, en sale,

Sur tous les bâtiments,  
 Sur les trottoirs, les toits,  
 Les interstices. (V, 108)

The race for profit meets with Guillevic's disapproval. The poet draws a comparison between the city and teeth, implying that the capitalist city wounds and devours (V, 44). The city's "halo" is profane one, one of both exploitation and waste, combined in the word *usure*:

Voyons la ville  
 S'auréoler d'*usure*. (V, 19)

Such greed goes hand in hand with alienation. The cadence of the machines colonises the city to such an extent that even intimate relationships become profaned:

(...) nous commençons à sentir  
 Passer en nous, tourbillonner  
 Les électrons,

Jusque dans un sourire  
 Qui s'ébauche vers l'autre. (V, 48)

The city sucks life out of the worker, and in turn from out  
 of itself. The urban body becomes dead, inert:

Lieu de débauche,  
 Paraît-il.

Je t'aurai vue surtout  
 Etre une immense cour  
 Avec des ateliers

Pour broyer du travail  
 Qui tout autant vous broie.

Ici où tout se vend  
 Son poids de juste mort. (V, 136)

The antagonistic relationship between the urban and the  
 natural is often expressed in terms of a division between  
 sound and silence, or between sounds. The organised clamour  
 or silence of the city is in moments thrown into question.

The treatment of the city and sound in Guillevic's poem  
 is far from even. In one quantum, the urban machine works so  
 perfectly that no sound is made:

Quel genre de machine  
 Tellement lubrifiée

Que ça ne s'entend pas  
 Quand elle est à l'ouvrage? (V, 27)

The urban machine is, however, not so vigilant. In the form  
 of silence, sounds that escape this machine insinuate  
 themselves in the ears of the inhabitants:

La ville fait du bruit, des bruits,  
 Reconnaissable, reconnus, catalogués,

Pour en masquer de moins tranchés  
 De moins criards, d'indéfinis,

Qui viennent en catimini  
 Et font en nous semblant de jouer au silence. (V, 15)



The excluded voices of the city's conversation make their appearance. Terrifying, discordant cries occasionally erupt like the return of a repressed nature:

Il n'y a plus de bêtes  
Pour errer par la ville.

Pourquoi par moments  
Ces hululements

Ou ces autres cris  
A figer nos gorges? (V, 39)

The human inhabitants try to assert themselves by finding sounds outside the sound of the city. Thus, in conversation, citizens try to find an authentic speech that escapes their familiar, alien discourse:

S'ils parlent tant,  
C'est peut-être contre le bruit,

Leur propre bruit,  
Fait par des autres. (V, 121)

The city is therefore never completely dominant. The principle of the human, or of the earth, resists the destructive urban environment. Guillevic contrasts the prehistoric with the city, making the latter insignificant in comparison with the earth. Thus, the origin of life precedes the fabrication of the city:

Toi qui joues à la vieille,  
A celle de toujours, celle des origines,

Tu n'as pas tellement de milliards de secondes  
A ton passif-actif. (V, 21)

The solid construction of the city is reduced to insignificance in relation to the destiny of the earth:

Tu es quand même pointée  
De ce magma-matière,

De tout ce qui se tient  
Derrière un mot pareil,

Vers son destin futur  
Dentellé dans le vent. (V, 92)

Guillevic thus opens his perspective onto the history of the natural elements. In one quantum which astonishes by its incongruity, Guillevic evokes his place of birth:

Je viens de la mer, de l'île  
 Où sur les géants de roche, le vent  
 Souffle comme au temps  
 Où les éléments se sont séparés,  
  
 Où parfois j'ai peur d'être avec la mer,  
 Le goémon, les mouettes,  
 Dans le temps d'avant notre temps,  
 Face à cette eau qui n'est pas dans le temps.  
  
 Revenant de la mer, alors  
 Tu n'es rien pour moi,  
 Ville en superficie. (V, 117)

Here Guillevic finds the true origin, elements both timeless, and if in time, beyond human history. Such communication with the depths of the earth throws into relief the shallowness of the city.

### 3) *The Assertion of the Natural*

Even though the links between man, nature and city are incomplete, Guillevic wants the city to be a place of well-being. Despite the brutal effects of the city, there is a dream of restoring organic ties, prefigured by nature. Humanity responds to this challenge in different ways, both public and private. Poetry is celebrated by Guillevic as a means of sealing union with the city.

The fact that the city is a human creation causes an imperative to change. A change of human conduct is necessary for the city to be changed. The process of change is one that is reflexive, which points back to the citizen:

Il vaudrait mieux jouer  
 A se changer la ville,

A nous faire des jours  
Qui célèbrent la ville. (V, 67)

The challenge is to establish the urban space at the level of the inhabitant. To reconcile the two urban bodies. The ideal is a restoration of organic links, with a subsequent end to the "subject-object" dualism:

Il faudrait, je crois,  
Pouvoir circuler à travers la ville  
Comme un globule rouge  
A travers un corps,

Qui voit en passant,  
Touche les tissus,

Parce qu'il est en train  
De devenir ce qu'il regarde. (V, 36)

Thus, the blood which was coagulating in one quantum is freed to flow. A greater ease of circulation is desired:

On aimerait  
Que ça fulgure davantage, là-dedans. (V, 23)

This completion of the urban body is, however, in the realm of the imaginary. The divided city is a place of promise, of will for change that is asserted in different fashions. Nature acts as a cipher for this impulse, promising a better future:

Certains jours,

Il y a sur la ville  
Des oriflammes de sourire

Qui seraient là pour annoncer  
De plus beaux jours. (V, 62)

As with nature, so with the human. The citizens have a desire for the restoration of plenitude in the midst of division:

Ils ont besoin d'être ensemble  
Dans des creux de la ville  
Où ils font du plein.

Ils ont besoin  
De sentir ce plein, tellement  
Il y a de vide. (V, 78)

How is this desire expressed? On the side of the non-human, nature asserts itself against the man-made environment. The repressed silence of the cased earth rises up to threaten the city:

Encore maintenant, la ville a du mal  
A taire le silence  
Dont la masse l'attaque.

Il monte par le sol,  
Mord sur les fondations,  
Enrobe les chaussées,  
Enveloppe les toits,

Devient puits dans le ciel. (V, 73)

Hypothesised is the shift of the silent earth, with fatal consequences for the things built on it (V, 74). In the future, the challenge is to define the city's relationship to the earth. On the one hand, the spiralling city may spread itself out over the countryside:

Toujours plus grande, plus étalée,  
Plus en hauteur aussi,

T'entrechoquant, t'escaladant, te poursuivant,  
Te régaland  
De l'écartèlement? (V, 137)

On the other hand, the city will find its centre and enter into a cordial relationship with the countryside:

Où seras-tu encore  
Le centre recueilli  
Desservant les campagnes,

Leur présentant,  
Non pas l'absence,  
Mais leur visage du dimanche? (V, 137)

This challenge to urban organisation points back to human behaviour. There are different "human" solutions to the incomplete body: individual and collective, private and

public, with accordingly different spatial and temporal features.

One solution that Guillevic suggests is a collective one, which temporally is linked to the grand narrative of progress and which spatially is situated in streets. Temporally, in the progress from the old into the new, the different seconds are joined together in a new *durée*:

Il y a pourtant des jours où la ville  
De chaque seconde  
Fait une durée.

C'est lorsque la ville  
Brûle du passé  
Qui la contraignait. (V, 42)

Spatially, in this progressive movement, the urban subjects, previously divided by economic calculation, are fused together in the crowd. This crowd in turn completes the urban body which achieves strength and the presence of voice:

Un, plus un, plus un,  
Et encore un, d'autres encore,  
Et d'autres, plus.

Un chaque fois qui s'additionne  
A tous ceux qui sont là,  
Autant de fois rien qu'un.

Tous ceux qui vont, qui se rassemblent,  
Qui ne sont plus une addition,  
Mais autre chose,

Où la ville prend muscle,  
Où son souffle prend voix,

Tâte son avenir. (V, 79)

*Souffle* is a word used in several quanta. It combines the circulation of life through the urban body, the sound of the crowd, and the notion of the "winds of history". The "breath" of the city is not continuous, but operates unevenly, advancing then congealing as something objective.

The angry crowd wrests the *souffle* from obstinate  
objectivity and revives the city as hero:

C'est, en définitive,  
Un souffle que la ville.

Auquel s'ouvrent parfois  
Ou se ferment les portes.

Lui qui bout dans le vide  
Qu'elle serait sans lui.

Qui se solidifie  
Pour devenir des rues.

Mais qui demeure souffle  
Dans l'immobilité.

Puisqu'on voit se lever  
Les gens et les colères.

It is therefore not simply the contemporary class struggle  
between profits and salaries which is translated into the  
urban landscape. Congealed in the streets and buildings is a  
spirit of struggle and revolution: history can be felt  
there. In this landscape, the revolutionary crowd enters  
into communication with its history, reviving the hidden  
flow of the not-yet:

La foule doit savoir,  
Doit sentir qu'aujourd'hui

Son souffle a débouché  
Le souffle de la ville,

Et qu'ils vont tous les deux  
Emmêlés, confondus.

Arracher au passé  
Son besoin d'avenir,

Les faire commencer  
A parler au présent. (V, 83)

With this, Guillevic is keeping alive the grand narrative  
of progress. The city is a story of struggle for  
emancipation that is retold by the crowds. Guillevic retains  
therefore the hope of revolution.

But the collective completion of the urban body is only one solution. Another solution is the union between man and woman. In the act of love, man and woman overcome their individual isolation and, in turn, connect with an eternal principle that brings meaning to the city:

Combien d'hommes, de femmes,  
A former couple au même instant,  
Dans tes lumières, tes pénombres,

Vont vers l'un, vers l'autre en tâtonnant,  
Qui s'inventent, s'oublient, se retrouvent  
dans l'autre,

Pris, enroulés  
Dans un tissu qui les dépasse  
Vers l'origine et les futurs,

Prennent en charge ton noyau  
Avec ta pulpe, avec ta peau,

Te portent haut,  
Te justifient. (V, 37)

Sexual love is the model of the possession of the urban body, promising both sacred time, *durée*, and sacred space, *demeure*:

Il me faut t'inventer  
Ce qui te fera femme

Pour demeurer en toi  
La durée d'une extase. (V, 94)

The completion of the urban body through love creates a different space. Instead of the exterior of the streets, there is the interior of intimacy. With the appearance of the lover, night and day are resolved together, contraries unified, in a subterranean space:

Maintenant qu'il y a  
Ton corps et ton visage  
Visibles dans la ville,

Le soleil et la lune  
Font lit commun, parfois,

Au-dessous des maisons  
Ou dans les caves bien fermés.

This is a drawing back from the exterior into the folds of the earth. The lover's kiss brings forth the subterranean:

Il y a dans la ville  
Du souterrain venu  
Du temps d'avant la ville.

Pour me regarder faire,  
Il a trouvé des yeux  
Qui passent par tes lèvres. (V, 130)

Here the lovers pass out of the frame of human history. Rather than entering society, a deconditioning takes place. Thus, in one quantum, the bedroom is a place of whiteness and silence, wiped clean of the city:

Dans la ville est ta chambre  
Et ta chambre est silence,  
  
Un silence tout blanc  
Qui respecte le blanc. (V, 122)

The home is positively valued. If the venture into the streets in demonstrations was Guillevic's extravert side, he also tends to move away into a home from the city. Presence is found in the womb-like recess of the bedroom:

Calmement calfeutré  
Dans un repli du temps.  
  
Douceur des chambres, longs séjours  
Où se savoir  
Rencueillé dans le silence.  
  
Présence aucune, mais celle  
De la présence. (V, 109)

Different time-scales, as well as spaces, can be identified in this poem. On the one hand, there is the reactivation of historical time in the form of the great narrative of progress. On the other hand, there is the moment. The moment peeps out from the time used up by the city:

Elle sait, la ville,  
Comment employer  
Les grandes masses de temps  
A son avantage, à sa nouaison.



Les digérer, les expectorer  
Selon le hasard des milliers de rues,

Les retenir en gris et rose,  
En ponçage de pierres.

Ce qu'elle sait moins  
C'est ce qu'on peut faire  
Du temps en détail,

De la chapelure  
D'heures, de journées,  
Qui s'en va sans elle. (V, 41)

Just as in the lover's bedroom there was a wiping away of the city, so in an instant, a sense of absolute nothingness is found:

Il y a des jours où il n'y a rien  
Sur le ciel et dans les rues.

Rien dans les couloirs,  
Les places non plus.

Pas même à présent  
Un ricanement.

Nulle part des dents  
Contre le moment. (V, 87)

In the course of this chapter, the problem of the city has become frequently a problem of communication. The notions of the "circuit de l'attente" and of the circulation of blood through the urban body lend themselves to a cybernetic view: each part belongs to a complex unity. The problem of the city is its loss of communication with itself: be falling from circular perfection, the city no longer "announced" its existence. Related to this were divisions in sonority: repressed sounds were struggling to make themselves heard in the city.

It was said at the beginning of this chapter that the citizen felt both alienated from the city and unavoidably connected to it. This is also expressed in terms of language:

La ville est comme un mot  
Que je ne connais pas. (V, 33)

The city is part of language, in other words, human life,  
but eludes definition. What is desired is a handing over of  
the city's "signified":

Machines, cybernétique.  
Électrons, lubrifiant,

Tu crois que répéter  
Des mots comme ceux-là  
Fera venir la ville,

Parce qu'ils parleront  
De ce qu'ils véhiculent,

Qui s'entrepouse  
Dans leurs buissons. (V, 34)

If by being a word whose meaning is hidden, the city is a  
form without content, a *signifier* without a *signified*, the  
words mentioned by *tu*--machinery, information technology,  
lubrication--fuse form and content, hand over their meaning.  
They "deposit" a stable signified in their bush-like  
networks. The city, however, resists such a fusion.

The poet attempts a resolution of this problem by  
entering into communication with the city. The poet breaks  
his silence to invent a dialogue between the body of the  
urban subject and the equally frustrated body of the city:

Il ne voulait plus, cet homme  
Du silence.

Il avait trop de bruits  
Dans les rues de son sang

Pour être seul, au creux d'un vide,  
A les attendre et les entendre.

Il fallait qu'il y ait  
Dialogue entre ses cris  
Que son corps étouffait

Et les bruits de la ville. (V, 146)

The dialogue is the flowing together of the "arteries" of both subject and city: the linguistic union is at the same time a physical union. From this, the process of writing possesses in terms of meaning and of the erotic:

J'écris sur toi  
Comme j'écris toujours:

Pour posséder. (V, 60)

The fusion of the urban subject and the urban body is therefore linked to the creation of a text. In this case, the etymological sense of "text" becomes useful: just as the ideal supersession of the subject-object separation was the flowing of the citizen into the city's *tissu*, so the city is a *tissu* woven into the harmonious whole of the text.

#### 4) *The Incomplete Body*

In the course of *Ville*, there is no definite healing of the gap between man, nature and the city. Writing proves to be only a partial solution to the problem of city life. There is a continued antagonism between nature and city, while the rehumanisation of the city is suggested to be doomed to failure.

The poet does not have a sure link with his fellow citizens. Instead of there being a grand narrative that the poet illustrates, now a polycentrism takes over. There is a multiplicity of ways in which language can resolve problems of city life:

Dans les caves de la ville  
Il y a un mot  
Pour ouvrir l'espoir  
Lorsqu'il est chuchoté.

Ce n'est pas le même  
Toujours et partout.

Il faut avoir  
Interrogé bien des espaces  
Et ne pas être à l'aise  
Tout à fait dans les caves.

C'est aussi bien: frontière  
Que source ou goéland  
Ou des mots plus lointains  
Comme acte ou dispersion. (V, 85)

This quantum opens with the idea of the "one word" which breaks through to the light. But the promised doctrine--religious or political--is immediately dispersed. The word is not stable in time or space: it is the product of experience, of continual and restless itinerary. With this, in the final group of lines, the "word" is heterogeneous, being either concrete or abstract, natural or scientific. The poet thus points to individual solutions. The poem on the city does not capture and hand over its "essence" to the reader:

Ce que j'écris sur toi  
Ne te montre pas.

Qui ne t'a jamais vue  
Ne peut à travers moi  
Te voir, te supposer.

Je ne suis pas plus montreur d'ours  
Qu'un algébriste. (V, 98)

Rejecting the *one* word or the *one* representation, Guillevic's poetry becomes reformist and processual. By this I mean that it does not attain one definite and universal meaning for the city, but rather grabs moments of plenitude from a vast, continually objective environment. This is the sense of one quantum:

Toujours en travaux,  
Tes rues, tes trottoirs.

Et je te creuse et je te comble.  
Et je recreise au même endroit,  
Et je remue et je rebouche.

Comme si l'on venait  
 Gratouiller ton squelette  
 Avant qu'il ne s'ennuie. (V, 61)

In his writing, there is continual alternation of penetration and regress, plenitude and emptiness, a process which continually conjures back to life the urban body. The poet is on an itinerary, finding occasional reconciliation with that part of him which is congealed in the city. But the path continues:

Va! Continue  
 Ce chant de flûte, mais c'est qui?

Il va la ville, se frotte aux murs,  
 De rue en rue, de place en place,

Et par moment il se concentre  
 Comme de l'ombre avec de l'ombre

Et va plus loin  
 S'insinuer. (V, 145)

There are moments of deep pessimism in *Ville*, in which hope is inexorably negated. For instance, the utopian promise of eternal sunlit peace is followed by reiteration of the antagonism between city and nature (V, 17-18). The organisation of space appears to be doomed to failure. The attempts of architects to humanise space only create inhumanity, an outcome which the creators are aware of:

Je les comprends: il fallait bien  
 Qu'ils fassent quelque chose, les hommes  
 Qui t'habitaient,

De plus grand qu'eux-mêmes  
 Et de plus durable,

Pour être sûrs qu'ils n'étaient pas rien  
 Que des éléments de tes courants d'air

Et ils ont fait énormément  
 De bâtiments démesurés

Qui les niaient et témoignaient en même temps  
 Que ces hommes le savaient. (V, 118)

The citizens are thus continually reminded of the inhumanity of the city. Good intentions pave the way to hell. With this, the city becomes characterised by eternal recurrence. One of the final descriptions of the city conveys its endlessness:

Quand on regarde dans la ville,  
Tout, presque tout,  
Est rectangle ou carré.

Lorsqu'on l'écoute,  
Ce n'est pourtant, toujours,  
Que roulement.

Tournement de toupies  
A n'en jamais finir. (V, 141)

With this, Guillevic's city begins to resemble the sea in *Carnac*: the interminable construction and deconstruction of forms, the eternal and difficult "dialogue". This has implications for Guillevic's social orientation. Guillevic is undeniably humanist in this poem: he emphasises the human origins of the urban environment and the need to humanise it. But the urban environment remains objective in this poem. Like the sea, the city seems obstinately inhuman, a definitive emptiness.

## II) *Paroi*

With the Stalinist disappointment, there is an irruption of otherness into Guillevic's universe: man has become separated from his environment. The central problem of the poetry of this period is how to found a world amidst chaos. This is often expressed in spatial terms: valorised are the house, the sphere; a reconciliation must take place between the urban body and the citizen.

This problem is hardly resolved: as long as chaos exists outside the walls of any settlement, how can limits be tolerated? If one ventures outside these walls, how can total possession of space ever take place? This has obvious implications for Guillevic's residual utopianism: can the promised land ever be achieved, or is it relativised by boundless space?

*Paroi*, written in the aftermath of the desires and disappointments of 1968--both Paris and Prague--marks a crucial turning-point in Guillevic's world-view. In his first full-length exploration of the *dedans-dehors* dialectic, Guillevic investigates the spatial relationship of *ici-là*, applying it to several spheres of experience. At first, the *paroi* is seen as the obstacle to progress. But, in the course of the poem, Guillevic demonstrates the ambivalent nature of limits. By the end of the poem, Guillevic is disillusioned with utopia and appropriates the *paroi*.

### 1) *Paroi as Alterity*

The *paroi* is portrayed as hiding intimacy and disrupting relations between man and woman. It is a cause of oppression and obscures the truth. As a result, the *paroi* must be breached.

The *paroi* is the elusive other. It is the lack that the subject must overcome. In the first of the four "Letters" which make up *Paroi*, the subject is split between "moi" and "silence". The "speaking" which takes place does not produce

greater meaning, knowledge or contact; instead, it is a bleeding wound produced precisely by lack of knowledge:

Peut-être je te le dirais  
Si je savais.

Mais si je le savais  
Je n'aurais plus sans doute  
Ce besoin de parler. (P, 7)

In the face of such a split between words and silence, the poet sets out on a quest for unity which links knowledge to desire:

(...) c'est une femme  
Le silence.

Il y a donc  
A découvrir. (P, 9-10)

In the "Letters" that follow, the *paroi* both attracts and regresses, in a parallel relationship with the subject. It lacks the "thereness" of the physical world:

Pas même un mur  
Où se heurter, où vaincre.

Rien que le mur de vent,  
Le mur d'absence. (P, 14)

Like the city, the *paroi* is a word that the subject does not know: it is part of life, yet tantalisingly elusive. The subject desires a handing over of its meaning:

(...) tu ne sais pas qui parle,  
Ni de quoi, ni dans quelle espèce de langue,

Mais tu sais bien  
Que c'est fondamental

Que c'est cela  
Que tu passes ta vie  
A déchiffrer, à t'acclimater. (P, 40)

But if this language of the *paroi* is fundamental, it is infected with otherness. Words directed at it fire wide of the target:

C'est significatif  
De ton insignifiance,



Après tout, que même  
Quand j'avais le plus  
Besoin de parler,

Ce n'est pas à toi  
Que je m'adressais. (P, 61)

The *paroi* perpetually draws away from the subject, while remaining an obsession. In one section, the discovery of the *paroi* and its subsequent penetration are followed by suspicion that the real one is elsewhere:

Parfois certaines choses  
Faisaient office de *paroi*  
(...)  
Mais toujours le soupçon venait  
Que la *paroi*, la vraie *paroi*  
Était ailleurs.

Et ne nous quittait pas  
Pourtant, jamais. (P, 33)

The *paroi* both promises and denies intimacy. Projected by hypothesis is a transformation of the *paroi* into softness and tenderness:

Et si un jour le flasque  
Avait gagné le mur.

Tu vas par habitude  
Pour cogner sur lui,

Et voilà que te caressent  
Comme des mains.

Et ce sont celles  
Du mur, de cette *paroi*

Qu'il y avait  
Entre plus loin et toi,

Qui n'avait jusqu'ici  
Aucun égard pour toi. (P, 15)

To live the experience of the *paroi* is to live the yearning after and loss of this intimacy. On the other side of the *paroi* there is believed to be this longed-for peace:

Je pars du principe  
Que le verso est plus intime  
Que le recto,

Et comme il est probable  
Que la paroi  
Cache, ainsi que je fais,  
Ce qui est plus intime,

J'en conclus  
Que ce qu'elle tourne vers nous autres  
Est du recto. (P, 101)

The *paroi* denies unity, harmony, and communication. It insinuates itself into all forms of social situation. Closely related to the promise and denial of intimacy is the experience of the *paroi* as the disruption of relations between man and woman. The lover inevitably returns to the elusive other side of the *paroi*:

Aucune, jamais  
Qui ait, une fois pour toutes,  
Traversé

Et soit venu près de moi,  
Contre moi,

A jamais,  
Par tous les instants.

Aucune,

Qui ne soit pas, de temps en temps,  
Repartie là-bas, me laissant

A ma rumination. (P, 177)

The *paroi* plays its role in social situations. It manifests itself concretely as the social adversity that the downtrodden poor must suffer:

Pour un mal nourri,  
Pour un mal logé,

C'est à tout bout de champ  
Que cogne la paroi.

Chaque fois qu'il bouge,  
C'est contre. (P, 112)

The *paroi* is also the fog of common sense and superstition that prevents contact with the real. Unsurprisingly,

Guillevic targets religion. It is a false solution that diverts the followers from its reality as the *paroi*:

En permanence  
Elle se déguise,

Essaie de faire  
Qu'on ne la voie jamais,

Nous parlera du père,  
Des mains tendus vers nous

Comme si c'était  
Pour quelque espèce  
D'ange du bien. (P, 113)

The *paroi* therefore denies presence, plenitude, meaning, intimacy, social justice and the real. As a result, the speaker wants to find the *paroi* and break through to the other side where these qualities can be handed over. The subject is frustrated, oppressed by limits, and wants to breach them:

On n'est pas à l'air,  
Pas dans la lumière.

Soulève et creuse,  
Fais le passage.

Fais qu'il débouche,  
Soulève encore, fais-en ta part.

Au moins ta part,  
Pour qu'on débouche. (P, 12)

## 2) Ambivalence of the *paroi*

The subject therefore wants to breach the *paroi*. But problems remain. Will the end of limits not cause an end to stability? Boundless space may cause vertigo and a paradoxical sense of suffocation. This gives rise to one of the processes of contradiction that provide the dynamic of Guillevic's long poems: between the freedom that transgresses limits and the security of enclosure. In the

course of *Paroi*, Guillevic points out the importance of limits and, because of this, moves between bouts of introversion and extraversion.

The *paroi* compares favourably with a boundless horizon that offers nothing against which the subject may define himself:

L'horizon  
Accuse les torts  
Et donne peu des avantages  
De la paroi.

Puisqu'on ne peut s'y adosser,  
Qu'il fuit toujours  
Sans jamais proférer  
Même les mots reçus,

Qu'il paraît nous épier,  
Nous regarder sans voir,

Qu'on ne peut lui crier de près  
Qu'il est supplice. (*P*, 300)

In the absence of manifest physical restraints, humans invent limits in order to end movement:

S'il n'y a pas de bord  
Tu en fais pour dire

Que tu es arrêté. (*P*, 20)

This positive side causes the *paroi* to take on an ambivalent colouring. Is the *paroi* good or evil? Is it necessary for life?

Tu ne sais même pas  
Si l'existence incontestable,  
En tout cas l'obsession de la paroi,

Est pour toi un mal  
Plutôt qu'un bien.

Si tu vivrais  
Sans cette paroi. (*P*, 36)

Having broken through to the open air, a nostalgic longing appears for the *paroi* that offered him the joy of transgression:

Lorsque j'étais dedans  
Existait le bonheur au moins

De découvrir quoi faire  
Pour aller au-dehors  
Dans le dehors sans mur. (P, 71)

This ambivalence is dramatised in the final quantum of the second "Letter", in which feelings turn abruptly from frustration to joy:

(...) la paroi sans doute  
N'est pas que verticale,

(...) c'est aussi le ciel,  
Tout ce qui est plafond  
Aussi bien que cloison.

--Ne maudis pas la sphère:  
Tu y trouves ta joie. (P, 147)

### 3) *The Failure of Totality*

Utopia is the space promised in the present. It is the better life projected into the future. If present existence, of man belittled and despised, is *dedans*, then this utopia is *dehors*. But utopia is not an infinity of projections outside an existing state. It is the space where all contradictions are abolished. Utopia dissolves the *dedans-dehors* opposition, and it is that which Guillevic confidently predicted during the Stalinist period. In *Paroi*, however, the discourse of promise gives way to a tolerance of stubborn otherness. The hope of total possession of space fails. In *Paroi*, there is still the desire for utopia, connected to a kinetic view of language as weapon of progress. But in the course of the poem, there is disappointment with politics, leading to language being redefined as "graffiti" reforming the *paroi*. By the end of

the poem, the previously rejected *paroi* is appropriated in order to confront emptiness.

A strong utopian impulse remains in this poem. In familiar Guillevic fashion, the loving couple are linked to the collective as part of one progressive movement. Imagined is a day when the lovers are united, which in turn promises the fall of the *paroi*:

Peux-tu imaginer  
Ce que cela serait pour moi  
  
Si un jour c'était toi  
Qui m'apparaissais  
  
Au pied de la paroi, soufflant  
Dans la trompette de Jéricho?  
  
Nous irions ensemble  
De l'autre côté  
triompher ensemble. (P, 148)

With the repetition of "ensemble", the emphasis is on togetherness. The opaque exterior is illuminated by the unity of all the world's utopians:

On devrait recueillir  
Tous les rêves de gloire  
De tout le monde.  
  
Cela ferait un grand livre  
Qui illuminerait l'espace. (P, 150)

With "un grand livre", Guillevic is linking utopia and writing: dreams are to be inscribed. Thus, language retains its revolutionary, kinetic power. In one quantum, language is described in combative terms, as sending projectiles that overcome the *paroi*:

Ou bien parlez-moi  
Plutôt du langage.  
  
C'est par lui qu'on tient,  
Par lui qu'on attaque et qu'on se défend,  
  
Par lui qu'on envoie  
Fouillis et foison

S'occuper de lui faire  
Sa fête, à la paroi.

Quand les directions ont été données,  
C'est déjà comme si. (P, 163)

But "comme si" both promises and refuses the desired utopia. In the course of the poem, the *paroi* refuses to give way to collective struggle or poetic language. In one quantum, the speaker tries to definitely deny the existence of the *paroi*, and hence herald the coming of utopia (P, 167). The following micro-text abruptly deflates such a definitive end:

Facile à dire,  
Facile à se promettre.

Mais vivre me parjure. (P, 168)

Thus, experience has taught Guillevic to temper his revolutionary ardour. In an implicit reference to Stalinism, Guillevic remarks that tyranny is reproduced by those who sought to overthrow it. The liberation struggle that broke down the *paroi* reconstitutes it:

Meurt parfois le tyran  
Et pas la tyrannie.

Il arrive qu'elle soit  
Règie par ceux-là qui la dénoncèrent  
Quand le tyran vint à mourir.

La paroi  
N'avait qu'un peu reculé.

Sonnez, clairons!  
Elle est debout.

Elle est solide,  
Essayez voir. (P, 192)

Similarly, in one quantum, there is promised a collective movement towards the discovery and possession of the unknown:

Nous irons, nous ferons  
Que la paroi recule. Nous occuperons.

Nous aurons plus de vue.  
 De notre pouvoir nous serons les maîtres  
 Sur une aire plus large. (P, 194)

But in the immediately following quantum, just as the *paroi* eternally re-assembles, so the achievement of definitive knowledge is postponed as a centrifugal or inkblot effect takes place:

Mais plus grande sera notre aire de clarté  
 Plus grande aussi sera la zone de ténèbres  
 Que nous irons toucher autour d'elle. (P, 195)

This disturbs the utopian fusion of subject and object, *dedans* and *dehors*. There is no definite end to such oppositions. With growing awareness of this stubborn reality, Guillevic develops means of living with it.

If the violent nullification of the *paroi* was associated with combative language, survival is expressed by words as graffiti written in defiance on the *paroi*. The *paroi* acts as the witness to the heroic battles against it. Salvaged from the failure of total revolution is the artistic gesture of graffiti:

Puisque paroi il y a,  
 Tant que paroi il y aura,

Qu'elle serve au moins,  
 Qu'elle nous serve

A écrire sur elle  
 Ce que l'on fait contre elle. (P, 203)

From the moment of acceptance of the *paroi* there is an introverted movement. Valorised are the small, comfortable spaces where refuge can be found from a threatening outside:

On s'accroche à des coins  
 A des maisons surtout.

Comme si l'on pouvait  
 S'y croire à l'abri,



Y tourner le dos  
 A ce qu'on ne veut pas,  
 Pour qu'il n'arrive pas,

C'est en soi-même, alors,  
 Qu'on se rencoille,  
 En niant l'espace. (P, 208)

Such introversion is only temporary. Towards the end of the poem, the speaker returns to the open space and its invitation to the speaker:

Voici donc l'étendue

Et ses impératifs--  
 Peut-être

A découvrir  
 Dans l'étendue. (P, 217)

Is this the rebeginning of the struggle against the *paroi*? The imperative to *découvrir* echoes the end of the first letter. But now there is an emphasis on giving form to chaos. The act of creation becomes an attempt to map out the environment:

Par exemple, inventer  
 De donner des contours  
 A l'étendue ou tout au moins

A des fractions de l'étendue. (P, 218)

Thus the desire to find a new space remains, but with the awareness of the vastness of the environment. In turn, the dialectic of *dedans-dehors* ceases to be an intolerable conflict, but rather becomes an essential matrix. The poet discerns relations between inside and outside;

Savoir donc  
 Les rapports

De l'intérieur de chaque chose  
 Avec l'extérieur, avec l'étendue. (P, 219)

The significance of this is that Guillevic has moved from expansion to containment, and has also gained the capacity to discern relations between inside and outside. The chaotic

nature of the expanse is contrasted with the space founded by the poet. By containing emptiness, and creating dimensions of inside and outside, the poet *becomes* the *paroi*:

Etre en somme paroi

Pour l'étendue  
Qui rêvait  
D'être habitée.

Aussi pour soi. (P, 222)

Is this not the reiteration of the theme of founding a world amidst chaos which was prevalent from *Carnac* onwards? Yes, but with the added importance that Guillevic's revolutionary ardour has been severely tempered. It can be said that Guillevic has moved from a desire for totality for one of unity continually re-enacted. The *paroi* was the wall separating the collective from the promised land. Such a definitive endpoint has now disappeared. Instead, the latent positive attributes of the *paroi* are appropriated: delimitation, durability, permanence. The final quantum announces this:

Etre paroi.

Se confondre  
Avec la paroi.

L'intégrer.  
S'intégrer.

Rêver le temps  
Devenu corps. (P, 223)

Thus, time, otherwise objective and uncontrollable, becomes a human space: at one with the metabolism, vividly immediate like a body, in erotic unison. The poetic celebration of this process of transforming the expanse is *Inclus*.

### III) *Inclus*

In *Inclus*, Guillevic presents the "sacrifice" of the poem as the grounding of a world amidst chaos: it allows temporary inclusion in the whole. It is the post-Stalin height of Guillevic's serenity, with oneness and chaos alternating most happily, with the least melancholy. The certainty of inclusion offered by writing lets the path be accepted as necessary, lets mortality be lived with, and domesticates emptiness. In *Paroi*, the collective utopia was considered then discarded. In *Inclus*, the promised space is the space of writing: the poem necessarily justifies itself.

#### 1) *The Desire for Inclusion*

In *Inclus*, the poet attempts to create harmony from surrounding space. This movement towards order is, at the same time, a response to the call of the poet's environment.

The poem begins with the promise to found a world:

Pas autre chose à faire  
Maintenant

Qu'inventer la courbe  
De la plaine au soleil.

Celles  
Du bosquet, du ciel,

Vers le lieu où ces courbes  
Vont rencontrer la tienne,

Bientôt. (I, 1)

The opening lines could be seen to continue the meditation of *Paroi*. In that poem, the speaker ended on the decision to

"become" the *paroi* and "inhabit" the space. Now the traced curves promise the housing of space, uniting sky and earth.

Such a project of unity faces problems. The construction of the world takes place in a space threatened with chaos. It seems on the point of disintegration:

C'est

Comme si l'espace  
Pouvait casser. (I, 6)

Elements feel excluded and desire inclusion. This creates a tension running through both speaker and environment:

Tension  
C'est quoi?

Rien qu'en moi?

C'est en tout cas  
Tenu par elle

Que je touche  
Et rassemble.

Sans elle,  
Rien. (I, 13)

This conveys both the fragility and the complementarity involved in the project of unity. "Tension" means a "tending towards", "intellectual effort" and the "threat of breaking": a movement that may or may not be successful. At the same time, there is in the quantum a combination of active and passive: the poet "gathers" but is also "tenu" by the other.

The product of such tension is the creation of harmonious wholes. A vague environment suddenly displays order, its map indicating the sacred spot:

Mais avec elle, pas  
Que des masses  
Tassées sous l'horizon

Et quelques pointes  
Comme effrontées.

Grâce à elle,  
Un réseau:

Des courbes,  
A chaque chose une courbe,

Et le centre des courbes--  
Où sacrifier. (*I*, 14)

This desire for unity is complementary. The intention of the poet is to find, through writing, inclusion in the whole:

Tu écris  
Pour emplir l'espace.

Etre tout l'espace. (*I*, 210)

At the same time, the centre of the mapped landscape calls upon the poet:

Il appelle,  
Il a besoin

Que vienne quelqu'un  
Pour se servir de lui. (*I*, 168)

Guillevic is keen to reject the notion of the poet as separate from his environment. Faithful to his materialism, he replaces the omnipresent godhead with the sun which is the dynamic of all material being. Thus, even the solitary figure is part of sun-guided being:

Même celui qui se croit  
On ne peut plus seul,  
Abandonné,

Même celui-là  
Est impliqué

Dans des histoires, qui s'étirent,  
De caresses de la lumière. (*I*, 79)

It is this all-pervading sunlight that inspires the movement to the place of sacrifice:

Il va

Il va s'offrir  
A la lumière de la plaine. (*I*, )

## 2) Writing as Sacrifice

Writing is described by Guillevic as permitting inclusion. Although writing is utterly "profane", being rooted in the earth, it performs the sacrificial function of connecting up with the origin.

Writing provides the *axis mundi*, the centre of the earth where all is gathered and united:

Ecrire,  
C'est trouver

Le lieu où tous les lieux  
Qui touchent tes regards  
Se rassemblent pour toi. (I, 20)

The illusion and chaos of the universe is overcome by the power of the word. Writing renders space immediate and palpable:

Cet autre espace  
Au toucher de muqueuse  
Qu'est l'espace du poème,

Le transporter ici  
Dans l'impalpable espace  
De la plaine.

Que cet espace de la plaine  
Ait le même toucher.

Frôle alors de ton front  
Cette annonce de muqueuse. (I, 193)

Immediacy is conveyed here as the self-presence of voice. The rolling of the words from the tongue is at the same time the activation of the "souffle possible" (I, 8) of the expanse.

The poem expresses the essential in the midst of the arbitrary. As something fundamental, it stands rooted vertical over surrounding dispersion. Its presentness draws

it to vegetal life. Just as the trees respond to the sun, so the poets pay homage with language:

Soleil! Soleil!  
Les chutes

De tes rayons  
Vers les abîmes.

Les peupliers  
Déjà répondent.

Et nous  
Chargés de l'hériture

Contre l'espace menacé  
De dispersion. (I, 73)

With this, poetry is linked to the earth. Overseen by the sun, poetry is a response to the call of the earth. In *Inclus*, Guillevic mixes together images of cultivation and writing. Paths across fields, which may be either furrows or the itinerary of shepherds, are "written" beneath the sun:

Tous les chemins  
Ecrits à travers champs

Par les générations  
Et le même soleil. (I, 27)

These paths written on the soil are the occasion for the manifestation of the origin when, in Eliade's schema, the "Gods" created the world:

(...) il y eut plaisir,  
Visiblement.

Il suffit de les voir  
Accueillir le soleil

Comme on raconte l'origine. (I, 32)

By comparing the "recounting of the origin" with the absorption of the sun's rays by the earth, Guillevic is presenting writing as in complicity with the natural cycles. The poem is not a disembodied creation, but rather takes place in the "espace des fruits" which is rooted in the soil cultivated by man (I, 31).

The "espace des fruits" is the centre where the sacrifice of the poem takes place. the task of the writer is to respond to the call of the centre and carry out successfully the rite of writing. Guillevic describes the heightened tension as the sacrifice takes place. Drawn together are the "centres" of the poem and the centre of space. If the coincidence of the centres is successfully completed, the sacrifice of the poem reveals the origin:

Ainsi donc,  
Plus par l'écriture tu creuses,  
(...)  
Et plus tu débouches  
Sur de l'ouvert:

Pour un temps, reconcilié

En présence de son origine  
Ressuscitée. (I, 149)

Thus, Guillevic's poem appropriates the dimensions of the sacred. Just as the sacrifice of an animal was a re-enactment of the mythic victory of the world over chaos, so the poem returns us to the *illud tempus* when the "Gods" lived on the earth. With this return of the sacred, *les noces* take place. The sacrifice makes present the erotic unity of page, lover and world:

Cette page.  
Ton sein.

Le monde  
Est arrivé. (I, 35)

### 3) *Poetry and the sacré sans Dieu*

Throughout this period of Guillevic's work, poetry has been mentioned as one of the ways in which the world was founded amidst chaos. The word allowed the "possession" of the urban body; the *chant* was the harmony of the earth's elements.



*Inclus*, centred on the theme of poetry as sacrifice, gives Guillevic's most comprehensive version of the poet and holiness without God.

Guillevic situates himself in the wake of the collapse of the old theologies. The Gods have left the earth, and it is the poet who confronts their absence. For this reason, the *sacré sans Dieu* has a difficult relationship with society. Because if, in a state of total holiness, the poet was recognisably priest of society, now in the modern, profane condition, the priest does not have the same authority and prestige.

In *Inclus*, the poet is described as having a difficult relationship with society, due to his rare talent with language. He is more a cosmic than a social animal, being open to the "other" in general. In order to express his poetic talent and communicate with the "other", the poet must refuse traditional, encumbering world-views. Continually, Guillevic uses the themes and imagery of religion, which leads him, as an atheist, to portray poetry as immanent and emphasise the provisional, relative nature of the poetic sacred.

In early poems by Guillevic, the poet is presented as a figure reviled by human society who turns his back on it to commune with nature. In *Inclus*, a lengthy comparison of the writer to the clown revives, to an extent, this division between poet and public:

Le clown est celui-là  
 Qui a tourné le dos,  
  
 Qui tente encore une fois  
 La puissance du rire

En descendant dans un volcan  
Ou dans la foule

Et qui ne garde rien pour lui. (*I*, 50)

The poet-clown stands out from the crowd for the fact that in the sacrifice of writing he has deconditioned himself:

Il est celui de nous  
Qui a quitté le masque, (*I*, 52)

The poet is able to cut through illusion due to his unusual talent. What distinguishes the poet from the rest, Guillevic claims, is his greater sensitivity to the "langue de la tribu", a reference to Mallarmé (*I*, 56). The poet is an exceptional figure whose language links man and earth:

Ce travailleur  
Privilégié,

Qui va de terre en terre,  
De mot en mot,

Qui noue ensemble terre et mot (*I*, 81)

But if Guillevic's poet has an exceptional talent for words, this does not disembodify him, sending him to some ivory tower. Instead, the imagery linking language, work and the earth points to a poet immersed in what is other: solipsism is illusory for a poet of matter.

The poet remains linked with society. The poet is described as sharing his fellow citizens' desire for truth:

Il est l'un de ceux-là  
Leur frère en tout.

Il craint comme eux  
D'être victoire d'un mensonge. (*I*, 131)

The poet shares the others' condition of worker and citizen, and hopes for a future reconciliation of poetry and the public:

Rêvant  
De cette société

Où tous  
Auront loisir d'écrire. (*I*, 132)

The sacred that the poem manifests is offered to the collective. An osmosis of poet and society brings the *fête*:

Je suis, dit-il,  
Vous tous.

Prenez-moi tous  
Ou laissez-moi vous prendre.

Avalons-nous.

A ce prix  
Est la fête. (*I*, 92)

If horizontally, in the present, the poet's language is offered to the collective, vertically, in history, the poet is in connection with the past. The language that is used in the sacrifice brings with it the history of the people (*I*, 145).

The poet is therefore implicated in society, both past and present. But this implication does not stop at the human frame. Connected to the sun-guided earth as much as to society, he opens himself to let the sacred manifest itself. His role is to be torn open:

--Ecartelé  
Et ne s'étonnant pas de l'être.

C'est son état. (*I*, 90)

The poet provides the active occasion for the return of the origin:

Il est l'accueil,  
Le lieu d'accueil. (*I*, 91)

The poet's openness to the other has obvious implications for his practice. In order to insert himself in the world, old, encumbering forms must be stripped away. Delirious comparisons are attacked for obscuring the reality of what is seen:

Ce n'est pas difficile

Dans une touffe d'herbe  
De voir un incendie  
Où s'exaltent des cathédrales,

De voir un fleuve qui se presse  
Pour les sauver.  
(...)

--Mais voir la touffe d'herbe. (*I*, 96)

To be genuinely included, however, means to be at one with what is seen, to bracket off all preconceptions:

Simplement,  
Voir. (*I*, 98)

Writing in this poem has been linked with working the earth: the act of writing is rooted in the ground, takes place in the "espace des fruits". By this, Guillevic is translating the notion of sacrifice into a profane code. The page is the altar, what is written is the sacrifice, and the writer is the officiant. Guillevic, as before, takes care to reject the transcendent godhead. The rite of writing is not justified by heaven, but is rather the creation of the poet:

Ce n'est quand même pas  
Tombé du ciel.

Sa page,  
C'est son travail  
Intelligent,  
Critique

De lui-même  
Et du reste. (*I*, 69)

The holy place where the sacrifice takes place is stripped of the traditional vestiges of crucifix, elaborate interiors and hymns:

Il n'y aura pas de croix,  
Ni de clous.

Pas même de sang.

Le décor n'a pas d'importance.

Le silence. (*I*, 87)

Guillevic resists the lofty social position that the writer-officiant might adopt. For all his talent, the writer is a worker, not a magus:

Il n'a rien d'un archange  
Ou d'un prééminent.

Il fait métier d'écrire. (I, 133)

Such a refusal of a transcendental role for the poet brings with it a refusal of hopes of immortality. If the poet is faithful to matter, he forces himself to realise that his days are numbered (I, 194).

This appropriation of the sacred, with its rejection of the heavens above, its celebration of the earth, and its acceptance of death, has more negative consequences. For with the disappearance of official theology and the departure of the gods from the earth, there is a new uncertainty. The *sacré sans dieu* is a decentred *sacré*: there is no definite place in which the holy will continually manifest itself. For this reason, in *Inclus*, the centre is found, the sacrifice is made, only for chaos to return again, with the subsequent need to reconstruct the centre:

(...) le centre à nouveau  
Va se chercher,

Désirer qu'on le trouve,  
Avoir besoin qu'on vienne

Celui qui le délivre en l'enserrant,  
Par l'écriture. (I, 83)

#### 4) *The Reconciliation of Contraries*

During this third period, the struggle between world and chaos has also been, to a limited extent, a hope for and disappointment with collective change. After *Paroi*, in

*Inclus*, explicit hope in political change disappears. Yes, Guillevic wants to see a society where all have the leisure to write, but this is drawing the future society towards the already existing certainty of writing: his writing is not pointing to anything outside the institution of poetry itself. The space that is sought after is the "sacrificial altar" and it is on the certainty of writing as redemption that Guillevic relies. With this new certainty, the itinerary becomes a joyful one: it denotes promise more than lack. A consequence of this new certainty is that the chaos which threatens becomes familiar: it is seen as a necessary part of creation. In *Inclus*, Guillevic incorporates emptiness and darkness, and intuitively unity through the use of paradox. By doing so, the poet can be seen to gain a new serenity.

On his path towards the sacrificial altar, Guillevic's poet is haunted by emptiness:

Tu es là,  
Tu es toujours là.

C'est à cause de toi  
Qu'on n'est jamais seul,

Provocation  
En forme de creux. (*I*, 178)

In *Carnac*, the inalterable nothingness of the sea caused a stoical awareness of the impossibility of finding equilibrium. In *Inclus*, however, the certainty of creation makes emptiness a necessary spur to its success:

Cette marche ne va pas  
Sans la vision du précipice,

Sans l'horreur nécessaire  
Devant le creux. (*I*, 38)

With this, contraries no longer seek to annul themselves, but are rather reconciled. Light and dark become not rigidly separated but complementary:

La lumière  
Naît dans le noir,  
Meurt dans le noir.

Ecrire  
Se fait entre le noir  
Et la lumière,

Le temps  
De posséder les choses. (I, 44)

Thus the poem inscribes itself in alternating episodes of birth and death. Similarly, the poem uses the opposition full/empty. Omnipresent emptiness is rehabilitated as the space in which creation may take place:

Sans le vide  
Rien n'est faisable.  
(...)  
C'est lui  
Qui permet que ça remue,  
Qu'on remue tout ça. (I, 115)

This decision to accept rather than annul contraries culminates in a string of paradoxes:

Dans le plein du creux,  
Dans le noir de la lumière,  
Dans le silence du chant,  
Dans le présent du futur,  
Dans la marée du repos,  
Dans la douceur du tranchant,  
Dans la douceur d'une épaule. (I, 185)

The final line is not a paradox. It is an image of affection, of *les noces*, which englobes the preceding paradoxes. These paradoxes are the expression of a sense of unity with the world. Rather than taking the side of one part of the universe against the other, Guillevic accepts all parts of the whole. With this, he attains serenity. If, in the poem "Aux arbres" (A, ), man desires the patience of the trees who could bend and live with the grain of history,

in one quantum of *Inclus*, the poet attains the vegetal patience of the tree:

Il se ferait pommier,  
Lui, dans l'espace détendu.

Il aurait cette frondaison,  
Ces pommes, la patience.

Il n'exagèrait pas davantage  
Que la saison ne peut pour lui.

Mais quoi?  
Il est déjà, il est pommier,

Même dans cet espace  
Qui va craquer.

C'est pommier qu'il ira  
Vers cet autel qui le réclame. (I, 84)

In *Paroi*, the first part of this quantum would be in the *dehors*, unreached, to be struggled for. But now with the desires and disappointments of history apparently domesticated by poetry, Guillevic can serenely confront the problem of chaos.

#### IV) Form

By studying the overall structure of the poems, I will attempt to deepen this description of the writer's world-view. This will be followed by analysis of aspects of the quanta that make up the long poems.

##### 1) *Ville*

In *Ville*, the city, like the sea in *Carnac*, is a place of incompleteness. The speaker has a personal relationship with his environment--the city is often addressed as *toi*--but this relationship is denied its consummation in the union



between the citizen and the urban body. This difficult relationship is reflected by narrative orientation, temporal unevenness and the denial of the epic form.

In some quanta, the poet describes the city in a detached, objectivising manner:

La ville est comme un mot  
Que je ne connais pas. (V, 33)

In other quanta, this gives way to the intimacy of dialogue:

J'écris sur toi  
Comme j'écris toujours:

Pour posséder. (V, 60)

A similar movement of shifters involves speaker, city and woman. There is the description of love as an eternal principle directed at the city:

Combien d'hommes, de femmes,  
A former couple au même instant,  
Dans tes lumières, dans tes pénombres. (V, 37)

There is an address to this principle:

Femme, peux-tu te voir  
Au-dessus de la ville (V, 123)

Briefly, man and woman are united in the face of the city:

Le tremblement  
Prend quelquefois la ville, pourtant,

Mais c'est le nôtre,  
A travers elle. (V, 127)

Such shifts in pronouns point to the incomplete body of the city: the principle of love, which should consecrate the city, manifests itself frequently in spite of, or in the absence of, the urban environment.

Similarly, shifting orientation also affects the relationship between the subject and the collective, in contrast with the untroubled unity of the *nous* of the second period. The poet sometimes expresses a common desire to change the environment:

Nous n'acceptons pas  
D'être seulement

Les bâtisseurs de tes murailles,  
Les façonneurs de tes rivages. (V, 28)

However, at times, the collective seems to be separate from the poet, its militancy a parallel activity:

Ils ont besoin d'être ensemble  
Dans des creux de la ville  
Où ils font du plein. (V, 28)

Continuing this distancing from the collective, the speaker finds himself in moments of isolation. The *Je* refers back, for instance, to a previous statement about its tangential relationship to the city (V, 93, 102). The *Je* also indulges in memory (V, 50).

Temporally, the poem is uneven. There is the dominant present of description and interrogation. The conditional mood is used for hypothesis and desire. There are brief moments of the future tense of the discourse of promise. The past tenses help to convey memory and tradition.

Such movements of consciousness without deliberate aim, picking out moments, crumbs of time overlooked by the city, lead to time being chopped up throughout the poem. As in *Carnac*, there are terms of temporal dispersal rather than development:

On voit *parfois* (V, 52)

Le tremblement/ Prend *quelquefois* la ville. (V, 127)

Thwarted by an urban body that he cannot possess, Guillevic resorts to the language of conjecture:

C'était *probablement* la ville (V, 9)

On *peut* penser que tombent (V, 54)

The result of temporal segmentation and shifts in orientation is that there is no passage from a beginning to a definite end. Instead, there are configurations created from the pronouns and tenses mentioned above. *Ville* is a profusion of micro-narratives, those on, for instance, the historical subject, the lovers blessing the city, moments of plenitude, descriptions of the city's fever. No one narrative dominates *Ville*; instead, the narratives find their place in either isolated texts or sequences of texts. Lengthy sequences do occur at moments of intense identification--the utopian sequence, the love sequence--but even in these cases there are modal variations, either between *ils* and *nous* or by interruptions by other themes. The conclusion of the poem does not resolve the problem of the urban body. Instead, it refers to an attempt at exchange or dialogue between self and city. *Ville* can be seen as a series of exchanges, of reactions, of ways of seeing and living. It is an exploration of the city, and not a long poem of the epic type: the city is too problematic to become a hero.

## 2) *Paroi*

If *Ville* is an open, discontinuous process of "mapping" the urban environment, *Paroi* moves towards more linear progression. It is also characterised by contradiction in order to express the inside/outside opposition.

It is structured as four letters. The choice of the epistolary form, if that is what it can be called when there

is no difference in style from Guillevic's non-epistolary works, at least symbolically conveys the notion of absence, of a meeting with the other deferred but aimed for. The first letter is on the idea of silence, ending on a resolution to unveil. The second is on the nature of the *paroi*. The third moves from a desire to liberation to humility, to love and writing and optimism, to humility again. The final letter presents the *paroi* as timeless, ending on a resolution.

*Paroi* could therefore be seen as a more closed narrative than *Ville*. It progresses as if borne down on by the weight of otherness: a quest for knowledge and freedom ending on a new humility. However, *Paroi* is a poem in which there are pulsions of optimism and pessimism. The use of conjunction, conjecture and transitivity creates a formation based mainly on contradiction, expressing the inside/outside opposition. Conjunction between quanta--when this happens--takes place through adversatives like *mais*, *quand même* and *de toute façon*. Likewise, causal ties like *donc* are rare, becoming more frequent as the poem approaches resolution. The inside/outside dichotomy creates a crisis of vision. As in *Ville*, there is a frequent use of modal adverbs and auxiliaries, such as *peut-être* and *probablement*. Verbs of knowledge and seeing convey the gap or surface imposed by the *paroi*:

L'empan/Paraît donné (P, 29)

Je crois bien l'avoir/Traversée, la paroi (P, 102)

The crisis of vision also manifests itself in the self-consciousness of the author, who considers and denounces images as "treacherous". Finally, the inside/outside problem

is echoed by an oscillation between active and passive. On the active side, there are traces of utopianism, short-lived movement or collective hope:

Nous irons, nous ferons (P, 194)

Nous ferons de la terre (P, 205)

In other moments, however, the non-human becomes active, working on the helpless humans:

Ta lumière opaline/Nous fait descendre (P, 86)

L'horizon accuse les torts (P, 30)

Related to this are generic structures, such as "Il faut aller" (P, 131), which convey a general condition beyond the control of the subject.

### 3) *Inclus*

After the resolution at the end of *Paroi*, *Inclus* conveys a new serenity based on the certainty offered by writing. There is hypothesis, comparison, statement and interrogation, but with little of the contradiction of *Paroi*. Instead, the poem is more spatial, coherence provided by the resonance of themes and motifs as well as brief sequences. *Inclus* is an open form in which there is deepening of theme and a lack of disruption.

Unlike *Paroi*, *Inclus* is an open poem which begins and ends on the quest for the sacrificial place. There is an identifiable "opening": space is on the point of breaking, with the following imperative to write. Throughout the following two hundred micro-texts, if the poem progresses it is a touch-by-touch deepening of the notion of writing and "inclusion". The subject-matter of the quanta is constant: that of the nature of writing. There are shifts in

orientation: the poet is mainly presented as *il*, sometimes as *je*, occasionally addressed as *tu*. Such shifts between *moi* and *lui* combine the intimacy of personal experience and the universality of the writer's role. To deepen the notion of writing, there are sequences of quanta, on writing and the earth, the poet and the clown, emptiness, the descent into the labyrinths. There are motifs which progress: the crow moves from a sense of *anomie* to one of inclusion, echoing the happiness of the poet. At the same time, the dragonfly writing its own history reappears in the context of autumnal death, conveying mortality and the fleeting nature of the poetic sacrifice. Finally, disruption only occurs rarely in *Inclus* to put into question the stability of the centre. *Inclus*, formally and thematically, is the long poem most "at home", combining openness and lack of contradiction.

#### 4) Internal Style

If there are differences in the overall structure of these long poems, the style of the interior of the quanta is common to all. Syntax and prosody are exploited either to create an immediate, direct effect, or to convey movement. The style of the quanta is often deliberately uneven, in order to convey variation and contradiction. Some are often discursive, with the result that there is a tension between the "prosaic" and the "poetic". Finally, there is a limited use of phonetic patterning.

Some of the quanta are structured so as to convey presence. This is expressed in nominal style:

Calmement calfeutré  
Dans un repli du temps.

Douceur des chambres, longs séjours  
Où se savoir  
Rencoquillé dans le silence.

Présence aucune, mais celle  
De la présence. (V, 109)

Here there is an emphasis on state. Verbs become adjectives--"calfeutré", "rencoquillé"--which combine with the nouns to convey a timeless "being there". Prosodically, harmony is conveyed in the first line by the balanced 3+3 stress pattern and repetition of [ka], while the placing of "présence" at the beginning and the end of the last sentence places the subject in happy circularity.

Apart from the direct, compact style, there is also an expansive style. In *Paroi*, with the discourse of promise there is a quasi-anaphoric expansion of future-tense verbs:

Nous irons, nous ferons  
Que la paroi recule. Nous occuperons.

Nous aurons plus de vue. (P, 194)

In *Inclus*, style conveys the *creusement* offered by writing:

Ecrire,  
C'est creuser dans du noir,

C'est au sein de ce noir  
Y sacrifier

Du noir qui est en soi,  
Le marier à du noir des mots

Trouvés là, apportés,  
Rappelés, convoqués,

Et naît un noir d'autre nature  
Irradiant le pouvoir

D'y trouver, d'y tenir  
Ce qui ailleurs

Ne pourra l'être. (I, 23)

The whole quantum is one long sentence, conveying a process of the transformation of darkness. This "production line" is dynamised by the permutation of the word "noir", the

repetition of verb forms and the prosodic equivalence of, for instance, lines 7 and 8. *Inclus* provides another example:

Par cela qui tremblait  
 Entre la page blanche  
 Et la main qui allait écrire,  
 Par cela qui tremble maintenant  
 Entre la page et la main  
 Qui a écrit dessus,  
 Par cela se déclare  
 Un peu du mouvement  
 Où ce qui est écrit sur la page  
 Tremble en direction  
 De la page prise dans le mouvement  
 Autour de la page et de la table,  
 Dans le mouvement  
 Qu'aucune page ne figera. (*I*, 63)

Again, a whole sentence is used to convey movement. The repetition of words has an incantatory effect, while the splitting of the sentence into separate groups reinforces the sense of a trembling movement between poetry and the silence from which it emerges. The dynamism is also evoked by the dilation in space and movement in time from past to present to future.

Between these two extremes of directness and expansion there is variation within quanta in order to convey theme. In *Ville*, a staccato rhythm conveys the alienation of the citizens under capitalism:

Un, plus un, plus un,  
 Et encore un, d'autres encore,  
 Et d'autres plus. (*V*, 79)

In the course of the quantum, the action of the crowd transforms the style:

Où la ville prend muscle  
 Où son souffle prend voix. (*V*, 79)



Here there is quasi-equality of stress (3+4/3+3), anaphoric repetition and the phonetic harmony of the fricatives [v] and [f]. Another quantum conveys the alternation of calm and chaos:

Le calme  
A notre appréciation.

Parce que c'est au cours du calme  
Que tout arrive, peut arriver.

Ainsi, une goutte  
Tombe du plafond  
Et s'incline une flamme: la dernière?

Passe quelque chose  
Qui jamais ne prendra corps davantage.

Monte l'épi qu'avec exultation  
Accueilleront les foules.

Et, de toute façon,  
Il n'y a pas de repos. (V, 99)

Stress-patterns here convey momentary calm and its disappearance. There is isolation of "le calme" and emphasis on the opening verbs "monte", "passe", "tombe" and "accueilleront", which draws attention to both the actions and the temporality that is being described. At the same time, regret is suggested by "la dernière" and by the eighth line which emphasises "never" and "more". The exultation of the crowd is deflated by the final autonomous group of hexasyllables.

The quanta in these long poems are sometimes discursive. For instance, in *Ville* there is a combative critique of cliché:

J'ai lu souvent  
Que la ville dormait.

Qu'est-ce qu'on voulait dire?  
Qu'est-ce que ça peut être  
Que dormir, pour la ville?

Elle est toujours en train  
De s'inventer une heure

Qui serait la première  
De sa nouvelle vie. (V, 40)

Guillevic places emphasis on everyday speech—it is significant that he frequently uses the familiar *ça* and not *cela*, and uses *peut-être* without inversion. Such emphasis on the everyday occasionally comes into conflict with the traditionally poetic. This may be seen as a profaning of the holy in *Inclus*:

Et de l'enfer que c'est,  
La tuerie sous les herbes.

Et l'eau,  
Et l'infini de l'eau.

D'autres coulées,  
D'autres passages.

Des infinis,  
En veux-tu en voilà. (I, 21)

Here the grandiose vocabulary of "enfer", "tuerie" and "infini" is deflated or "profaned" by the brusque final line which throws "les infinis" to the reader. Similarly, in another quantum of *Inclus*, excessive genuflection undermines the transcendence and seriousness of the all-pervading sun:

Hommage.

Laisse-nous,  
Sous ta puissante et grande puissance,

Nous occuper  
De choses minuscules et noires

Sur l'autel de la page. (I, 30)

The traditionally poetic use of sound is rare in Guillevic's long poems. But there are some expressive phonetic patterns. In *Ville*, the [R] and [o] sounds convey the rumbling of the four-stroke engine:

Cycle Beau de Rochas et ses coups répétés,  
Ronflement du rotor. (V, 107)

In another quantum of *Ville*, sound-patterns are cleverly used to describe the burgeoning poem of the city:

Un haut mur  
Fraîchement peint en clair,

Qui m'a fait penser  
D'abord à une joue,  
Chaude à cause d'une joie.

Ensuite à un e muet  
Dans un verre qui tendait  
A devenir sonore. (V, 70)

There is a tendency towards assonance between  
"fraîchement"/"clair"/"mur", "joue"/"joie",  
"devenir"/"sonore".

#### *Conclusion*

*Ville*, *Paroi* and *Inclus* show Guillevic's world-view moving away from the humanism and belief in progress that so dominated the second period. In *Ville*, a humanist impulse is still there, but it is a declining orientation alongside an awareness of a breakdown in contact between the poet and his society. In *Paroi*, political disappointment leads to the abandonment of hope in an absolute end to history. This culminates in *Inclus*, which short-circuits the link between poet and society by making poetry the means to reaching contact with what transcends the human.

### 3.7) ESCAPING THE HUMAN FRAME

#### *Introduction*

The themes of the poetry of this period can be roughly summarised as the conflict between oneness and chaos. After the confident unfolding promised by the Communist narrative of history, there is a breakdown in order and meaning. This new difficult situation causes Guillevic to search for unity with his universe, which, when briefly achieved, is the recovery of the ecological harmony denied by modern, urban civilisation.

Guillevic's work from *Du Domaine* in 1977 to *Creusement* in 1987 distinguishes itself by the way in which there is an *accentuation* of the themes of "oneness" and "chaos". If *Inclus* appeared to provide an aesthetic solution to the problem of chaos, in subsequent works there is pessimism that echoes the opening period of Guillevic's work. The defeat of order appears with the presence of death, the existence of an indelible yet indefinable guilt, and a belittling of the human.

Simultaneously, "oneness" is accentuated. Guillevic's advancing old age and his painful awareness of the failure of the hope of Communism, in other words, physical and political failure, point to the limits of human endeavour and turn thoughts away from historical change to the life/death cycle. In this period, there is what can be called an "escape from the human frame". There is weakening of the powers of the human. From destructive human *pouvoir* exerted on an "objective" world, Guillevic's hyper-

ecological view, of a network of relations decentring the human, moves to the *puissance* of a sacred bond with the world. There is a redefinition of the human in relation to the *humus*, an immersion of the body in the earth.

The accentuation of "oneness" and "chaos" affects the form of the poems. There is a return of the "structure of negation" found in the melancholy moments of Section Two. And there is a "decentred" style which defeats narrative unity in favour of a multiplicity of voices.

#### THEME

##### 1) *Pessimism*

In Section 3, Guillevic's poetry was dominated by belief in progress towards a better future. Nature and humanity moved in unison towards *les lendemains qui chantent*. In Section 4, too, this utopian impulse appears, although in a difficult and diminishing way. In recent works, this belief in the future has been reversed to create pessimism. The future is subverted by the presence of death, in humanity and nature, and by a "crime" which weighs upon the present and condemns the future. Such pessimism leads Guillevic to belittle human endeavour.

The reality of death, until now more or less absent, becomes a predominant theme in the later poems. Death is inescapably present in nature and humanity.

In "Graminées", the promise of life contained in the crops does not escape their inevitable execution by the scythes:

Des graminées  
Comme pour tout un jour.

Comme si le jour  
N'était pas là  
Pour la tuerie. (E, 13)

The grasses astonish the poet by their apparent disregard for their fate. But the final quantum of the poem reiterates the death theme as the scythe cuts them down:

Comme pour tout un jour  
Qui n'en finirait pas,

Des graminées debout  
Traversant les couteaux

Aiguisés par un air  
Toujours prêt au travail. (E, 16)

A similar gap between knowledge of death and its reality is described, this time in human terms, in Guillevic's elegy to Jean Follain. The poet is likened to Abel, with his connotations of faithfulness to the Lord, in Follain's case being faithfulness to the *réseau* of being, and of the innocent put to death. Follain is engaged in a struggle against mortality, picking out instants that halt temporal dispersal:

Difficile à comprendre

Et à quoi tend  
Le mouvement, sinon

A l'arrêt définitif,  
Avec

De temps en temps la grâce  
De quelque halte partagée. (E, 46)

But Follain's uncovering of the *réseau* does not eliminate the threat of death. One quantum

Le sang des corps  
Est la sève du temps. (E, 50)

implies inevitable death and violence as well as life and passion. Follain's project is conveyed as a provocation of time, *hubris* punished with accidental death:

18  
Le temps, lui, savait  
Que contre lui  
Tu avais des ruses.

Il a dû s'en remettre  
A l'accident.

19  
L'accident  
Détruit le réseau,

Détruit l'instant  
Qui est du temps qui s'aime. (E, 52)

With "du temps qui s'aime" Guillevic distinguishes between a time of peace or love and a time of violence and hate which is, he implies, the dominant one. In some poems, he links the force of mortality with negative feelings and generally, with the notions of crime and punishment. In "Galet", the pebble does not feel threatened by his surroundings:

L'horizon n'avait pas  
De raison de meurtre.  
  
Le galet,  
Dans le fond de la crique,  
  
N'avait aucune raison  
De se sentir visé. (E, 17)

But in the course of the poem, the pebble becomes aware of a "goût de meurtre/Inscrit sur l'horizon" (E, 19) and feels threatened by it. By the end of the poem it appears that the pebble is in fact condemned to death:

Peut-être  
Il y a eu condamnation.  
  
Et tout ce qui l'entoure  
Y a participé.  
  
Le mouvement sur lui  
Au cours de la marée,

Les caresses de l'eau,  
Du soleil et de l'air,

Tout cela n'était  
Qu'interrogatoires. (E, 20)

The presence of death therefore goes alongside notions of guilt, accusation and punishment. This motif of crime is summed up in the poem "Le crime" (M, 87-91). Crime is portrayed as all-pervading, with little opportunity for redemption. In *Du Domaine*, the domain is marked by an atmosphere of culpability:

Les massifs d'orties  
Servent de cicatrices. (D, 21)

Il y a des crimes  
Sans définitions. (D, 42)

In the first quotation, the scars of the domain suggest a history of violence. In the second, guilt goes hand in hand with the nightmarish loss of co-ordinates.

Guillevic links the motif of the pond with the notion of crime. The pond is described as a mouth which reminds the domain's inhabitants of their guilt:

Les crimes que recrachent  
Les eaux nocturnes. (D, 55)

Donnez vos preuves,  
Dit l'étang. (D, 74)

The pond may be seen as the dark past of the psyche. Stagnant, it is as imperturbable as memory. Deep and dark, it puts into question any confidence in finding a clear, untroubled reflection of the self. Instead, the pond is what Gleize felicitously calls the *béance* (1) which disrupts any unified subject and provokes the project of unity in a domain generally marked by guilt and lack.

The certainty of death and the inescapable guilt of undefinable crimes create a fatalistic view of the future



which belittles human endeavour. This belittling is conveyed in the poem, "Les menhirs". In *Carnac*, the menhirs at least promised the founding of a world amidst chaos: they had been part of, and inspired the quest for, the sacred. But here, the stones, far from symbolising hope for humanity, stand in contrast to the ephemera of which man is part:

Tout ce qui vient  
Autour de nous  
Et ne dure pas:

Ces nuages, ces herbes,  
Ces gens. (*M*, 10)

In turn, the stones distance themselves from the desire that has been invested in them by humans. Their holiness is reduced to conjecture:

Nous en avons vu  
Se mettre à genoux  
(...)  
Comme si le couchant  
Nous avait sacrés. (*M*, 10)

The end of the poem confirms a renunciation of hope. The triumphal march towards a fundamental rearrangement of the world order—*justice*—is replaced by a strenuous effort for balance:

Ce n'est pas vers la justice  
Que nous sommes  
Une armée en marche.  
  
C'est vers un équilibre difficile  
Dans un demi-cercle  
Avec une pierre plate  
  
Où le sang peut couler. (*M*, 11)

## 2) *The Network*

This extreme pessimism does not dominate Guillevic's later poems: instead, it is a new mood among others that marks a stage in his development. Alongside the pessimistic message

described above is a vision of ecological harmony, of a *network* of which the human is part. Guillevic describes the exchanges between different parts of the universe, and writes of a unifying force which breaks down divisions between "subject" and "object", human and non-human.

In "Branchies", the gills of fish are an example of places for life-giving exchanges:

Là, jour et nuit,  
Se font les échanges

Qui ailleurs  
Fabriquent les feuilles. (E 26)

The gills are "porteurs du complément" (E, 28). They sustain the network that links all being. The gills are thus connected to a planetary process:

Quelque chose  
Qui pour ne plus bouger

A besoin que ces échanges  
Fassent de la planète et du reste  
Un tohu-bohu. (E, 29)

In other poems, Guillevic describes a vital force running through nature, reminiscent of the pre-Socratics' idea of a basic element pervading the whole, for example Heraclitus's fire. In "La sève", the vital force links human, animal, vegetable and mineral:

Les rochers, les toits,  
Les fleurs, les palourdes,  
Les arbres

Sont traversés,  
Nourris par la sève. (M, 40)

Similarly, in "Le courant", this dynamic force unites inside and outside, human and non-human:

Ce courant  
Passe par toi  
Et rien ne s'arrête à toi,  
Et tout te pénétre,

Et bien des choses

A la fois te traversent  
Et demeurent en toi,

S'en vont avec le courant  
Tout en restant  
Dans ton dedans. (M, 62)

Such a monism draws Guillevic close to Chinese philosophy's belief that the universe can be apprehended in a mere blade of grass. In *Requis*, many of the quanta express this monism in the linking together of the miniature and the vast, the celestial and the utterly terrestrial:

Planétaire  
Est notre garenne. (R, 42)

Les solstices,  
La matière interstellaire,  
L'équateur céleste,

Et le terrier  
Dans le talus des champs. (R, 43)

La stature  
de chaque insecte

Est un discours  
Sur l'univers. (R, 67)

Guillevic escapes from the narrowly human frame by portraying the self as invested in the whole of experience:

On est comme des holdings  
Avec des participations  
Dans tout l'élémentaire. (R, 40)

A result of this holistic vision is that an organic relationship is evoked between self and the other: there is a confusion of attributes that overcomes a clear subject-object relationship. Thus, in "Paliers", the song of the bird brings about both involvement in the other and discovery of the self in the other:

Je savais que j'étais un peu  
De tout cela, de la confiance  
Que tout cela se donne  
En de tels jours.

Et l'oiseau,  
 Est-ce que ce n'était pas  
 Mon pareil, mon écho, mon autre,  
 Peut-être moi tout simplement?

Ce qui de moi n'est plus à moi,  
 Qui s'est donné?

### 3) Puissance and pouvoir

In following Guillevic's itinerary I have tried to show a move from a triumphant humanism to an ecological humility, an opening out to the other. This can be described as a move from *pouvoir* to *puissance*. What I mean by *puissance* is Eliade's term for the strength found in the sacred bond with the world. *Pouvoir* is the exercise of human power over nature and others. A result of this move from *pouvoir* to *puissance* is Guillevic's negative view of human civilisation. Another result is that Guillevic celebrates the virtues of the tree, which is presented as surrendering notions of authority in favour of peace with the environment. In *Du Domaine* and *Requis* there is a "humiliation", in the literal and etymological senses, where man abandons control and merges with the *humus*.

Guillevic presents modernity in negative terms. It is transgression, violation of harmony which inevitably condemns man. In "Urbaines" (*Cr*, 107), the future destruction of nature by industry tears man from his affective roots. The poem "Le clocher" (*M*, 12-22) describes the relationship between a bell-tower and *les gens*. The bell-tower firstly sees the "fog" of religious false consciousness, then the collapse of buildings and curfew in

war. The pessimistic story ends with the rise of tall buildings around the bell-tower blotting out the sunlight.

Guillevic celebrates the tree as a counterpoint to human civilisation. It is the epitome of *puissance* rather than *pouvoir*. In "L'arbre", the tree calls on the human to become like it, to achieve a mode of being which puts an end to authority:

Tu te vivras à plein,  
Tu seras toujours toi,

Depuis les radicelles  
Jusqu'aux pointes des feuilles.

Tu seras ton royaume  
Sans avoir à gérer,

Sans avoir à savoir,  
A trancher des questions. (M, 77)

The tree promises an existence where the self does not impatiently exert power over the other:

Tu ne rêveras pas  
De changer de destin,

D'avoir quelque pouvoir  
Sur celui qui n'est pas toi. (M, 79)

A similar message is found in "La forêt". The forest is a place of peace, of stability and silence, but it trembles with fear of predatory, destructive humans:

Je crois que ce sont les hommes  
Qui m'ont appris à frémir,

Eux qui me traversent  
Non sans malaise,

Qui me saccagent. (M, 83)

The result of human transgression is an unhousing of creatures which lived in complicity with the forest:

J'ai mes bêtes  
Elles me comprennent,

Du lièvre à la coccinelle,  
Du chevreuil à la fourmi

Elles se voient perdues  
 Quand elles me quittent,  
 Quand on m'abat. (M, 84)

The forest provides man with an example of openness to the other:

Les millénaires m'ont appris à vivre  
 Dans mes dimensions, mes propriétés,

A rester ouverte à tout  
 En me vivant moi-même. (M, 85)

The forest is first of all wise: it has learned a lesson, and has lived by millenia rather than by a short-term perspective. The forest shows *humility*: it lives within its dimensions. And finally, it is by being open to what it is *not*: it participates in the whole of being. This exemplary behaviour is repeated in "Le courant":

Tu n'es pas un souverain.

Tu es un lieu de passage,  
 Filtre et canal,

Et tu le sais  
 Et tu en vis. (M, 64)

The self abandons all *pouvoir* to become the active occasion for the expression of life. *Lieu de passage* conveys an organic process: the appearance of life in the mortal will be transferred in death to other elements. In life, the subject is part of a process of natural reproduction.

The "humiliation" of man takes place in *Du Domaine* and *Requis*. Authority is questioned, leading to its overthrow. The humiliation causes the poet to valorise the worm, as a *lieu de passage* immersed in the earth.

In *Du Domaine*, the notion of a "domain" immediately has connotations of power and ownership. But here such power claims are severely attenuated. If firstly the boundaries

and surfaces are uncertain, other quanta note that there is an absence of authority:

Le chat-huant se veut  
Conseiller du roi.

Il s'est trompé de domaine. (D, 22)

In this Kingless domain, acquiescence rather than control is practised:

Laisser les racines  
Resserrer sous terre  
Leurs filets. (D, 22)

There is an emphasis on opening to the other. The self does not contain the world but rather becomes the world's point of passage, of rendez-vous:

Accueillir.  
Comme les portes--  
Comme l'étang. (D, 122)

The self accepts the *béance* symbolised by the pond. Quanta propose a breaking out of the private frame:

Nous voir  
Comme nous voient  
Les guêpes. (D, 69)  
On t'accompagnera  
Si tu trouves ta route. (D, 48)

In the first quotation there is a desire to take the place of the nonhuman and the miniature, thus confusing inside and outside. In the second, the discovery of the correct path leads to contact with the other.

In *Du Domaine* and *Requis*, the ruler is dethroned and adopts the role of one part of a vast network of relations. In *Du domaine*, the apparent "ruler" of the domain is stripped of all authority:

A qui ce domaine  
Qui m'est imposé? (D, 23)

Le soleil est là--  
Et tu crois  
Que tu monologues. (D, 98)

Tu n'as pas inventé  
Les chevreuils  
Ni les papillons,

Avant toi les eaux  
Ont dormi longtemps. (D, 138)

Règir le domaine? (D, 116)

In the first quotation, the ruler ceases to be the origin or the essential part of the domain: rather than possessing domain, the situation is reversed to become an imposition. In the second, any presumption of being the whole of reality is disturbed by the presence of the life-giving sun. In the third, the history of nature surpasses the frame of human existence. And finally, the opening phrase of the poem, "Dans le domaine/Que je régis", has collapsed into a question.

Similarly, *Requis* ends with homecoming and humiliation:

Pour l'errant  
Trouver sa tablee.

\*  
Il a parlé parfois  
Plus haut que lui.

Pardonnez-moi. (R, 186)

The acceptance by the speaker of his place on the earth is accompanied by an apology for previous arrogance.

Once dethroned, the human immerses himself in the earth. The imperative to merge with the soil leads to the valorisation of the human:

Je me suis respecté  
Jusque dans les limaces. (D, 133)

Il faudrait

Descendre et séjourner  
Dans cette espèce de terre.



Il faut s'y frotter  
il faut grimper

Comme une annélide. (D, 134)

La cloporte  
N'est pas forcément  
Plus bête que l'aigle. (R, 65)

Limace,  
Petite soeur

Pour quelques errants. (R, 138)

The *annélide*, *limace* and *cloporte* are saved from the category of the "grotesque" to become as important as the "sublime" eagle. The virtue of these creatures is the way they are the *lieu de passage*. The worm may be taken as an unconventional emblem of Guillevic's poet: sifting through the soil, a genuinely "organic" intellectual, working the land, part of the whole. Harmony is created, but matter is perpetually reproducing itself.

#### 4) Deconditioned Views

The themes outlined above imply a rejection of society. Human behaviour is undermined, while the "humiliation" is an abandonment of rapacious, all-too-human modernity. If previously Guillevic placed his hope in the collective, in particular the Communist party, now he valorises deconditioned views that escape the dominant culture. Guillevic celebrates the virtues of the child and prehistoric man, whose immediate contact with things is unsullied by civilisation. The notion of "collective identity" is retained in the defiant assertion of Breton culture.

In "Source", Guillevic returns to his childhood landscape and with that to the source of his inspiration. Childhood is presented as an idyll.

Alors tous les temps  
Étaient pleins de temps. (Cr, 44)

Childhood is a time of immediate contact with the world:

En ce temps-là,  
Nous n'écrivions pas  
Le monde sur sa peau.

Nous étions dedans. (Cr, 39)

The children are *inside* reality: they do not separate easily "subject" and "object", "mind" and "matter". To write "le monde sur sa peau" conveys a state where the world has become separate, opaque.

It is as a child that Guillevic received his "calling":

C'est près de la source

Que j'ai été appelé, happé  
Par un regard de l'eau.

Depuis lors, ce regard entre nous  
Dure toujours. (Cr, 10)

The idea of the source "looking back" at the child conveys an animised, magic universe in which there is complicity. it also suggests the reflection of the face in the water and the projection of the self into the other. The connection with the spring means a link with the *courant* running through nature. With the calling to his mission, the child simultaneously gives *puissance* to self and other:

Si ce garçon  
Se voyait grand,

Il bénirait le paysage  
Et par là même  
Se bénirait. (Cr, 11)

Such a vision of the world puts the child in opposition to an adult world which denies this communication felt between self and things:

Tous ceux  
Qui ont vu l'arbre,

Vu le garçon  
Regarder l'arbre, le caresser,  
Lui parler,

Ils ont tous dit que l'arbre  
Ignorait  
Le garçon,

Alors que lui savait  
Qu'ils avaient pour longtemps  
Partie liée. (Cr, 15)

The adult world is separated from the well-spring's *courant*:

On se doutait bien  
Que tout  
N'était pas de source:

On fréquentait  
Les grandes personnes. (Cr, 38)

The other vision that has not left the well-springs is that of prehistoric man. In "Sauvage", which is a description of the *creusement* made by *il*, presumably the poet, this figure is outside the mainstream, having retained the primitive:

A la vérité,  
La préhistoire  
Ne le quitte jamais. (Cr, 144)

He pursues his solitary quest in a violent and uncouth struggle to unveil:

Il se dresse devant la falaise  
Et son regard

Y vrille des trous

Pour que l'intérieur de la roche  
Ait un accès direct

Au cri universel. (Cr, 133-4)

The only social identity valorised by Guillevic is Breton culture: but he adheres to this precisely because of its refusal of the narrowly human. In "Herbier de Bretagne", Guillevic celebrates Brittany as the fulfilment of the philosophy of oneness described above. Brittany is seen as distinctive through its unique marriage of sky and earth:

Ailleurs les plantes  
Ont à vouloir emplir  
La verticalité.

Ici, le ciel  
Est un voisin  
Que s'intéresse. (E, 194)

The landscape is peculiarly blessed by the sunlight and is connected with the origins of life:

Du soleil, aussi.

Nulle part, le soleil  
N'est comme ici,

Pendant tout le jour,  
Celui du matin.

Et c'est pourquoi les plantes,  
Même les fougères,

Racontent l'origine du vent  
Et restent jeune. (E, 200)

The human inhabitants of the region are in contact with things. Their dwellings, which in cities creep ever upwards and away from the earth, take the opposite direction. They engage in communication with the vegetal and with the ultimate origin, the sea:

Les maisons se voulaient  
Au plus près des plantes,

Etre des leurs  
En plus clair.

Les entendre.

Participer avec elles  
Aux espoirs de l'océan. (E, 203)

Towards the end of the poem, Guillevic implies there is a threat to Brittany, an alien, occupying force. The poem ends however with a celebration of the organic unity of Guillevic's home region. a blade of grass exemplifies the spirit of Brittany:

Où trouver ailleurs,  
A travers les atlas,

Un territoire où tout se tisse  
Comme un brin d'herbe? (E, 210)

The tone of the poem "Bretagne" is more concerned and combative. Again, Brittany gains particularity through the osmosis that exists there. Any sovereignty of one part in relation to another dissolves in a state of untroubled communication:

Tout s'y répond  
Et chaque réponse  
Appelle.

Rien ne se clame  
Mais tout se sait  
Dans le réseau. (Cr, 60)

In Brittany, humans live in complicity with the earth. The exploitation of the earth by the peasants is not a violation. They feel themselves part of the whole and draw back from its destruction:

On se sent fragment  
De ce terraque  
Auquel on s'attaque  
En le respectant. (Cr, 54)

But this ecological harmony is under threat from cultural levelling. The injustices against the Breton people are linked to the destruction of hillsides by the technocrats:

Parfois des cris  
Contre l'injustice,  
Les injustices,

Harpons jetés  
Sur les gens, le ciel breton,  
La dignité.

Des cris pareils  
 A ceux des talus arasés  
 Par ses technocrates. (Cr, 61)

The osmosis that gives Brittany its particularity is threatened by the mono-culture:

Aujourd'hui la menace  
 De l'effacement  
 Dans le partout pareil. (Cr, 62)

To the responsible work of the peasants and fishermen is opposed the brutalising technology of big business.

Guillevic ends on a note of defiance:

Ma terre  
 Restera elle-même  
 Et pas en arrière  
 Des mieux outillés

Pour davantage encore  
 L'abîmer,

Débrider sur elle  
 Ce pétrole venu  
 Engluer plus  
 Que ses oiseaux.

Le béton  
 N'avalera pas le granit.

Ma terre se défendra. (Cr, 62)

"Bretagne" is the last *engagé* poem to be written by Guillevic and illustrates admirably the shift in social orientation of the writer. From the opposition of workers to bourgeoisie, the structure of confrontation becomes that of technocrats against tradition, man against nature.

#### FORM

The content of the poems outlined above accentuates the opposition "oneness and chaos". This is deepened by the formal features of Guillevic's recent poetry. The pessimistic side to his world-view brings back the

"structure of negation" described in Section Two. On the side of chaos, the long poem becomes more diffuse, creating a style which decentres the individual mind in favour of the *réseau*.

### 5) Structure of Negation

In the work examined in Section One, there was found what I call the "structure of negation". In poems like "Bruyère" and "Arrière-plage" the positive was inexorably replaced by the negative. Such a movement expressed pessimism. This structure disappeared during the Stalinist period, while in Part A of this section, the openness of contradictions was the norm. In more recent poems, there is a return to the definitive triumph of the negative over the positive. This is found both in overall structure and within the quanta of poems.

Many of the poems are structured overall as ironic reversals. "Galet" (E,17) begins with the innocence of the pebble and ends with its condemnation to death. "Quand" (E, 59) begins with harmony and ends with torture. "Bactérie" (E, 7) begins with the eternity of the sea regardless of the bacteria's death; it ends with the living bacteria finding a dead ocean.

Within quanta, a similar process of negation takes place. In "Le crime" (M, 87), the author digs beneath appearances to reveal what is the underlying wound in the world:

Le monde n'est pas (...) Il est  
Tu n'es même pas (...) Il est

States of being are questioned:

Tu te dis innocent/Mais est-il innocent  
L'impuissant/Est-il innocent?

The most everyday, and in Guillevic's imaginary, the most positive characters are snatched from comforting familiarity:

L'arbre même/Te parle de crime  
Même le pigeon

This reversal combined with the intensive repetition of *le crime* and subject + *être* creates a sense of glibness and horror.

#### 6) Decentred Style

A major theme of this final period of Guillevic's work is the vast network of relations which surpasses the human. Man, as "ruling ego", is de-centred. This is expressed by changes in form, exemplified by the long poem, *Du Domaine*. If, in *Inclus*, for example, the *je* was important, if not universal, in this poem it takes a diminishing place in a polyphonic "domain". Diffuseness of structure and the uncertainty caused by drastically reduced quanta subvert expectations of narrative order. Finally, the synthetic thinking developed by Guillevic finds its expression, in *Du Domaine* and other poems, in paradoxical formulations.

The dethroning of the ego and the opening out to the other is reflected in the style of *Du Domaine*. Jean-Marie Gleize, in his study "Guillevic, Lettre, L'étang", makes the link thus:

Le risque de la continuité rhétorique, idéologique, c'est la recomposition unitaire, la saisie, l'appropriation par un moi-centre autour duquel tout s'ordonne ou se hiérarchise (...) L'écriture fragmentale brise la perspective ego-centrique, un



certain modèle de la représentation, et, avec lui, l'idéologie, humaniste, individualiste, qui la sous-tend. (2)

For Gleize, Guillevic escapes the narrow frame of the *je*. The coherence of the grand narrative, individual or collective, has given way to the dispersal of voices and cyclical, rather than definitely linear, narrative. If description of the inventory of the domain would be a confirmation of the powers of the ruling ego, here there is a fleeting style reminiscent of Japanese *haiku*.

The verbal scenario of this poem—the orientation of the speaker and the distribution of voices—demonstrates an opening out to the other. Throughout the poem there is an address by *je* to *tu*, in which *je* describes the domain and prescribes exemplary conduct: it can be seen as a form of initiation. As the poem approaches its conclusion, the pronoun *tu* becomes dominant, as if the initiation is reaching its completion, and wisdom is being handed over.

Pronouns shift between *je-tu-il-nous-vous-on*: the ordering *je* takes a diminishing place amongst them. To reinforce this decentring of the *je*, many of the quanta are pronounless, giving expression to the non-human. There is a plurality of voices in the domain:

Dormir, dormir  
Disaient les toits. (D, 115)

Pas pour toujours  
Dit la pluie. (D, 73)

Je préfère midi  
Répète l'angélus, (D, 143)

Tout  
Dit: pénétrer. (D, 87)

The abandonment of power is expressed in the overall structure of the poem. Cohesion and progression have reached

in *Du Domaine* their most attenuated form. In *Inclus*, theme was deepened through cohesive sequences. Here, there is rather coherence, the resonance of elements which return and echo each other across the text. These elements are, for instance, the turtle-dove, the pond, and the dew. By following the development of these elements an idea can be given of the narrative direction of *Du Domaine*.

Coherence can be found in the development of the motifs in *Du domaine*, even if they are dispersed. But the coherence that is found places emphasis on continual process. At the beginning of the poem, the failure of the turtle-dove's homecoming (*D*, 15) provokes a quest for *les noces*. But these are not assured (*D*, 60), with the result that the turtle-dove is last mentioned in a state of *attente* (*D*, 131). This combination of immobility and movement is repeated by the pond. Progressively, there is a transferral of the pond from the eyes of the turtle-dove (*D*, 66) to those of the deer (*D*, 142), but the pond remains stagnant, unperturbed by the wind which comes to disturb it. The struggle between the darkness of the pond and the rays of sunlight is reiterated without progression (*D*, 69, 119). And the desire to pierce the mystery of the pond is deflated continuously: there is an unfulfilled desire to break its mystery (*D*, 30), then a renunciation of the previous thought (*D*, 79), a resolution to speak at the pond (*D*, 87), which is again deflated by appearances (*D*, 90). The development, finally, of the motif of the dew confirms this circularity. There is a transferral of the dew from *je* to *toi*, but both share the desire to drink it: it is essentially *incomplete*.

From this overall view of the poem, I would like to analyse a part of *Du Domaine*. For this purpose I have chosen the opening pages 9-20. Such an analysis shows the existence of different levels of narrative, and the fleeting, notative style of the quanta.

In the opening quanta there is a certain stability of location with the description of the domain, a concession, it can be said, to the "realist narrative" which begins with an inventory of the surroundings. The same adjunct, "Dans le domaine" is repeated, and this cohesion is expanded by the statements in the present tense which formally appear to be connected to the adjunct, for example, "Le rôle de sentinelle/Est confié aux arbres" (D, 9).

However, this is cohesion at only one level of the text. The opening descriptive statements are followed by the irruption of "L'étang" (D, 9), indicating an obsession which by its strength disrupts linear thought. The descriptive system resumes only to be disturbed by another level of text:

Avancez! Avancez!

Avec  
Ou sans vous. (D, 10)

Thus, within the space of a few quanta, the stable verbal scenario has been fragmented. This does not mean chaos: the obsessive nature of the rumination causes resonance between elements. Unlike usual cohesion and progression which follows in linear fashion the development of ideas, here words and themes echo each other across the text. Thus, with the notion of "indispensability":

Les grenouilles  
Ne sont pas indispensables. (D, 100)

Reste l'oiseau  
Qui s'est trouvé indispensable. (D, 12)

Similar resonance takes place with the pond (D, 10, 12) and the look (D, 13, 20).

The relationships between quanta subvert therefore the narrative order which Gleize describes as egocentric. The quanta themselves also subvert narrative order. Guillevic's style here owes much to gnomic poetry and Japanese *haiku*. The quanta of *Du domaine*, extremely reduced in size, become notative, fleeting parcels of sense.

Guillevic never strays long enough to produce an ordered, exhaustive description of his domain. Instead, there are little *touches*, for example:

De grandes pierres  
Qu'on appelle rochers. (D, 19)

The speaker is drawing out aspects of the domain as he follows his path: there is an *enquête* being practised. Thus, an element comes into the mind of the speaker, setting off a question:

Des haies.  
  
Que fait un regard  
Que rien n'arrête? (D, 13)

As well as noting elements, the voice dispenses wisdom, for example:

L'oiseau  
Traverse.  
  
Reste l'oiseau  
Qui s'est trouvé  
Indispensable. (D, 12)

The effect of this fleeting, gnomic style is to create uncertainty and vagueness. Many of the utterances are at the limit of sense and nonsense. The use of negatives, for

example, creates a "hole" in meaning, a sense of both prohibition and mystery: if not this then what?

On ne parle pas du vent (*D*, 9)

Il y a des feuilles auxquelles  
Il n'est pas question de parler. (*D*, 20)

The formal features of *Du Domaine*--multiple voices, diffuse structure, uncertainty--challenge the notion of a single, narrative voice that maintains order in the text. These formal features are the effects of a synthetic world-view that underestimates the importance of a united, independent human individual.

Another effect, finally, of this world-view is the frequent use of paradoxical formulations. This is found in *Du Domaine*, for example:

Quand le vent se nie,  
Alors c'est le vent. (*D*, 19)

*Requis* provides many examples:

Planétaire  
Est notre garenne. (*R*, 42)

Les solstices,  
La matière interstellaire,  
L'équateur céleste.

Et le terrier  
Dans le talus des champs. (*R*, 43)

Ce qui me regarde le mieux  
Est ce qui semble  
Ne pas voir. (*R*, 172)

Je me possède trop  
Pour n'avoir besoin  
D'autre chose que moi. (*R*, 179)

Paradox is also found in "Les menhirs":

Nous sommes  
De l'immobile en mouvement. (*M*, 7)

Nous sommes de la durée  
Qui s'est arrêtée

Pour se voir passer. (*M*, 7)

Nous allons  
Vers où l'on va  
Quand on est arrivé. (M, 11)

Obviously, not all these quanta are purely paradoxical. The binding together of solstices and burrows is not saying that the solstice is a burrow, but it shocks by bringing together miniature and vast. In other quanta, paradox is pure. Such bringing together of opposites is another challenge to the ruling mind. Instead of the world being broken up into clear concepts, here the juxtaposition of elements creates mystery. Such juxtapositions show all elements flowing together: paradox becomes the expression of a higher unity. The paradoxes attempt to abolish distinctions of self and other, miniature and vast, immobility and movement.

### *Conclusion*

In the work studied in Section 2, Guillevic's world-view had a clear structure of confrontation: *nous*, the Communists, against *vous*, the capitalists. In turn, the *je* was decentred in favour of *nous* and the grand narrative of history. The use of paradox mentioned above points to Guillevic's move to another logic. Instead of class struggle, there is a synthetic world-view that attempts to break down barriers. In the work examined in this chapter, form and content convey the implication of man in a vast network of relations. If, in Section 2, there was an attempt to liquidate the individual in favour of the *avant-garde* of humanity, there is, in Guillevic's later work, an attempt to transform man into a *cosmic* animal.

*References*

- 1) Gleize, Jean-Marie, "Guillevic, Lettre, L'étang",  
*Littérature*, 35 (oct. 1979), 79
- 2) *ibid.* 80

3.8) EXPLICATION--"Magnificat" (*Tr*, 111-125)

## MAGNIFICAT

- 1) J'embrasse tes genoux.  
J'arrive.  
  
\*
- 2) Glorieux;  
Le tremblement  
  
Au moment  
De l'approche.  
  
\*
- 3) Ta lèvre.  
  
L'une,  
L'autre.  
  
\*
- 4) Dire  
Qu'il y a des moments  
  
Où pour toi  
Je suis  
  
Plus léger que l'air.  
  
\*
- 5) Alors seulement,  
  
L'horizon  
A disparu.  
  
C'est pourtant le centre--  
Et j'y suis.  
  
\*
- 6) En toi  
  
Le monde se résume  
Sans se réduire.  
  
\*
- 7) L'odeur de ton humus  
A passé par des mers  
Chargées de bactéries.  
  
\*
- 8) Tu racontes  
La houle des mers



En voie de chercher  
A se pacifier.

\*

- 9) En toi, je suis  
Mandataire--

De quoi?

\*

- 10) Une de tes voix  
Me vient

De ces eaux traversées  
Avant le temps de la parole.

\*

- 11) Les marées,  
Le glissement des roches,  
Le vol des goélands,

Comblent tes courbes  
Pour mon usage.

\*

- 12) La reptation rythmée  
Vers le royaume sans horizon.

\*

- 13) L'audace

De donner à nos corps

Ce que nous savions  
Plus béant

Que n'importe  
Quelle définition.

\*

- 14) Comme la lave  
Rampe sous la terre,  
Se rassemble,

Arrive à l'ouverture,  
Se donne,

Fait la place  
A d'autres laves.

\*

- 15) De ces douceurs  
Qui font crier.

\*

- 16) Passage fait,  
Toujours à faire

Vers l'origine,  
Vers sa poussée,

Son explosion.

\*

- 17) Comme le Gulf-Stream

A travers  
Les océans

Qui le réclament.

\*

- 18) Je retombe  
En dehors de toi,

Hors de l'empire  
Où est ta porte.

\*

- 19) Tu m'as laissé  
Entrer chez toi.

Tu m'as gardé le temps  
De me donner à vivre

Ce que peut donc ce corps  
Qui se croit exilé.

\*

- 20) Il sait,  
Ton corps,

Comment les molécules  
Débouchent dans les pétales,

Dans ce qui vient trembler  
Jusqu'au bord de tes yeux.

\*

- 21) Je te vois,  
Je ne te vois pas

Dans une pénombre  
En instance de volcan.

\*

- 22) Manière  
De rendre hommage

A l'indéfinissable  
Qui nous talonne.

\*

- 23) Alors, personne  
N'a plus besoin  
De se vouloir Dieu.

\*

- 24) Auparavant,  
: Pendant des profondeurs,  
  
Nous avons cheminé  
  
Parmi les impatiences  
Du sel et des iodures.

\*

- 25) De cela  
C'est toujours le temps.

\*

- 26) La seule façon  
Que je connaisse  
  
De plonger en entier  
Dans la préhistoire.

\*

- 27) Lieu géométrique  
De la cohésion  
  
Entre le nous  
Et le magma.

\*

- 28) Glisser  
Dans le cantique  
  
Dans la caverne  
Qui s'inventa.

\*

- 29) Ce que nous approchons,  
Que nous touchons,

Nous montre encore  
Un au-delà

A traverser,  
A caresser.

\*

30) Mon continent.

Mon océan  
De continents.

\*

31) Le répit  
N'était pas pour nous.

Le mouvement  
Est notre halte.

\*

32) Comment être plus près  
En étant au-dedans?

\*

33) L'éternité

Est un espace ouvert,

Un point  
Où s'enfermer.

\*

34) Nous avons appris  
L'un à l'autre  
Ce qu'il est.

\*

35) Il n'y a pas d'oiseaux  
Plus éperviers que nous.

\*

36) C'est pourtant toi.

Ce sont bien les détails  
De ton visage.

Il y a des moments  
Où je te reconnais

De l'intérieur  
De ton empire.

\*

37) Donc, le présent,  
Le passé, le futur

Peuvent tramer  
Le même temps

Dans un espace  
Entre l'espace.

\*

38) Essayons de vivre longtemps  
Plus loin que nous.

\*

39) Notre avancée

Se passe dans du noir  
Frangé de clarté,  
Plus ou moins.

\*

40) Temps  
Pas mesurable

Chargé  
D'événements immémoriaux

Dans l'aujourd'hui  
De l'immédiat.

\*

41) Là  
Partir et rester

Se définissant  
Dans l'asymptote,

Le corps à corps.

\*

42) Une île. Une île.

Une algue  
Où s'accrocher.

Une île  
Pour prendre pied.

\*

43) Hasarder en toi  
Ses frontières.

Jamais  
Sans espoir.

\*

- 44) En s'unissant longtemps  
Nos lèvres jouent pour nous

La fièvre des rochers  
Qui n'émergeront pas.

\*

- 45) Délivre-moi  
De ce délire

Dont jamais  
Je ne me délivre.

\*

- 46) Notre halètement  
Est celui des marées.

C'est celui du soleil  
Vers son plus grand éclat.

C'est celui de la nuit  
Lorsque le jour menace.

\*

- 47) Es-tu bien sûre

De n'avoir pas dormi  
En dehors de ton corps

Pendant ce long moment

Où la mémoire  
Parfois s'efface?

\*

- 48) Reste. Reste.

Ne t'en va pas toujours,  
Même tout contre moi,

Avec les vents, avec les fleuves,  
Avec tous les courants  
Qui sillonnent la terre.

Reste ce corps de femme  
A l'aise dans un lit.

\*

49) Refais les mouvements  
De la vie quotidienne.

Sois ce corps  
Qui se reconnaît,

Moissonné, en attente  
De l'instant qui s'annonce.

\*

50) Nous aurons tout le temps  
De n'être plus que nous

Caressant nos limites.

\*

51) Peut-être  
On n'en revient jamais,

On reste,  
Au long des jours,

Une équation de chair  
Porteuse des poussées  
Qui font grandir les plantes.

### *Introduction*

In the work of Guillevic, woman is presented as the encapsulation of his hopes: she is the sacred, her love is linked to *les noces* with Nature. By studying the poem "Magnificat", from the collection *Trouées*, I will show how woman is presented as the creature of paradox who offers the resolution of the contradictions of the final period of Guillevic's work.

Two comments can be made about the title. Firstly, the poem is a hymn to woman: she is the profane embodiment of the sacred. Secondly, "magnificat" means "he/she/it magnifies". Guillevic links love up to a whole cosmic process. In turn, such magnification disturbs normal dimensions of space and time, turning love into a force

which breaks out of definition into a fluid realm where all parts of the whole interconnect.

### 1) Theme

The cult of woman is a central part of Guillevic's version of the *sacré sans Dieu*. She offers *puissance*, and at the same time is physical, palpable, and thus immanent. If "Magnificat" is the song sung to the Virgin Mary at vespers, the crucial difference in this poem is that the female figure is incarnate: the poem celebrates physical love. Thus, Guillevic combines "sacred" and "profane" aspects in his description of woman. In the opening quantum, the kissing of her knees is both a posture of humility, reverence, but is also erotic. Similarly, in the second quantum, "glorieux" and "tremblement" have traditional sacred overtones, but the "approche" is nevertheless a physical one. In quantum 28, "Glisser dans le cantique" gives the sacred a body: it is an act of penetration, either into the female or into the ocean which Guillevic compares her to. The refusal of the transcendent is made in quantum 23: love overcomes any desire to become God.

Contact with woman permits contact with the "réseau" linking the parts of the whole. In quantum 6, the woman resumes the world without reducing it: she contains the essence of the world, like the "courant" and "sève" described in chapter 10. In turn, she overthrows logical space: her body is at once limitless and small.

Guillevic links woman to the elements. In quantum 7, she is a "terraqué" linking earth, "humus", and sea. She is fecund, containing earth as the ground for terrestrial life,



and the bacteria which are the primordial soup, the origin of terrestrial life. In quantum 20, her body is invested with mind. In contact with the force of life, it knows the process that leads to the emergence of beautiful plants. Similarly, in quantum 27, this brings the lovers into contact with the seething magma of the planet. Offshore, in quantum 17, like the Gulf-Stream she is a force of warmth, life, answering a cosmic "need".

The linking of woman to land, sea, and a general process of life-generation, links her to a process of perpetual beginnings. Thus, in quantum 8, woman's communication with the sea leads her to "recount" the perpetual expenditure of the waves' energy. On earth, love is linked in quantum 14 to the explosion of lava rising up from the earth giving way to more. Similarly, in quantum 16, the origin, the prehistoric, thrusts upwards perpetually to violently emerge. And in quantum 29, touch reveals new space which itself is to be crossed and caressed.

The emphasis on perpetual movement is both the denial of definition--there is no rest, no end-point--and is a paradoxical combination of immobility and movement.

Woman is firstly the occasion for the confusion of space/time coordinates. The traditional *dedans/dehors* dialectic persists only in the opposition woman/not-woman: in quanta 18 and 19, the male, after the act of sexual love, falls out from the woman and back into a sense of "exile".

Once inside the woman, however, traditional limits are paradoxically juxtaposed in an attempt to intuit the "fourth dimension" of love. Love, in quantum 4, makes the man "lighter than air": he defies traditional limits of gravity.

In quantum 5, the horizon has disappeared: there is an end to the empty, objective "étendue". Space is redefined in such a way that the "centre is everywhere": the subject is fully present, part of the "réseau". Similarly, in quantum 12, the "reptation rythmée"--both the movement of sex and of the sea--is without "horizon": immobility and movement fuse.

Other quanta confuse dimensions. In quantum 30, the woman is an "ocean of continents": she overcomes geographical limits of earth and sea. In quantum 33, the eternity of which they are part is both "open" and "closed". This is, firstly, another paradox that challenges again the inside/outside distinction, and, secondly, by being closed is separate from the profane time outside the realm of love.

The confusion of space is therefore at once the redefinition of time. In quantum 37, present, past and future are woven together in such a way as to abolish distinctions. A new space/time is created which is described paradoxically as a "space between space", a term which can only suggest the indefinable other dimension. Such an interweaving is an escape from the implacably objective space/time which is Guillevic's adversary in this third period. This explains quantum 35. By being "sparrowhawks" they are masters of space, fearing no predator.

Such a movement beyond ordinary definitions of space and time is at the same time a defiance of the powers of ordinary language. In quantum 10, woman, in contact with the origin, paradoxically "speaks" a pre-linguistic epoch. the following quantum exploits the meaning of "usage" to link the linguistic to the utterly non-human and elemental, the energies of the sea contained in her body.

The woman is therefore, as quantum 26 says, a means of attaining the prehistoric: she allows an escape from the human frame of society and language. Together they express the force of the "indefinable". Thus, in quantum 9, the man is a representative, but does not know of what. In quantum 13, by their "audace" the lovers heroically transgress limits. Their physical contact creates a "béance" which refuses definite conceptualisation. In quantum 21, the volcano is not simply emblem of the origin's perpetual emergence, but is also a halflight of lava and surrounding rock in which the lover's presence flickers continually. In quantum 22, the lovers are spurred on by something beyond definition. And in quantum 39, they advance in darkness fringed by light: attempts at clear definition are forever displaced by the "béance".

Love is described as causing the confusion of the human and the non-human: it becomes impossible to tell exactly where the human frame ends and the outside world begins. In quantum 36, the speaker is astonished to recognise the details of the lover's face, "pourtant" implying that such a presence of the identifiably human is not constant or evident. In quantum 38, there is the imperative for the couple to live "beyond themselves". Such a transgression provokes the question of quantum 47: does the lover ever leave the human space of the body and time of memory? This in turn provokes a movement back to the human frame, as if such a hypothesis destroyed the paradoxical whole that binds human and non-human. The human form is asserted in quanta 48 and 49. Woman is not dispersed among the moving natural elements, but is returned to her "real" existence as a

female; and in turn she returns to movements of the "everyday". But the erotic does not end there: it reacts in quantum 50 to revive the tendency outwards beyond normal physical limits.

In Chapter 3.7, I described the movement of Guillevic towards paradoxical formulations as the expression of the whole: miniature/vast, immobility/movement were held in equilibrium. Woman in "Magnificat" is magnified in such a way that she resolves contraries. This has already been shown in the space/time and human/non-human confusions. In turn, in quantum 15, "douceurs qui font crier" is a beautiful paradox which joins together the familiar opposition in Guillevic's imaginary between tenderness and violence. Woman is also described as a combination of order and disorder. In quantum 42, the desire for an island or the solidity of algae can be seen as a flight from the chaotic ocean that is associated with woman. But in quantum 43, the man can only randomly guess at the frontiers. This is not met with despair; instead, a happy acceptance of order/disorder is seen where the rocks struggle but without success to emerge from the ocean. The cry for deliverance from the delirium in quantum 45 therefore becomes an ambivalent opposition to the disorder of love. The speaker inhabits a universe where disorder and order coexist, definition is tended towards with perpetual defeat by the "béance".

Other oppositions are fused. In quantum 31, immobility and movement--what was the privilege of the menhirs--are contained by the lovers. This is echoed in quantum 46. The sexual act is linked to the cyclical life force of the sun

approaching midday, and the immobility/movement of the waves. It also occupies the cyclical indefinability of daybreak where ordered vision is promised but refused by remaining pools of darkness. Finally, in quantum 41, the speaker uses the geometrical figure of the asymptote to describe the paradox of love. The asymptote is a line which continually approaches a given curve, but does not meet it within a finite distance. Figuratively, this gives the sense of tending towards something without ever attaining it. The lovers therefore form an "equation" in which the project of unity is infinite.

Thematically, "Magnificat" uses the figure of woman to encapsulate the greatest hopes of Guillevic. The paradoxical combinations of inside/outside, immobility/movement, human/non-human, order/disorder, tenderness/violence attempt to resolve the oneness/chaos opposition that is the axis of the third period of Guillevic's life and work.

## 2) *Form*

The poem is formally a combination of order and disorder. There is coherence, but also cohesive links and notative style which subvert the teleological.

The cohesive sequences which exist emphasise rebeginnings. After the opening sequence, quanta 1-3, which convey the lover's approach, the next narrative landmark is quanta 18/19 which announce, with the past tense, the end of the sexual act. This is immediately followed by the celebration of the sexual act. Similarly, in quanta 24/25, the past tense is brought back to the present: love-making is conveyed as eternally repeatable. The next cohesive

sequence is that of the desire for order, 42-45, with its ambiguity, then the return to the human frame which is itself subverted in 47-50. The poem aptly ends in the present tense, opening out onto an infinity of love.

In addition to these cohesive sequences, there is resonance of elements. Images are repeated, with variation, across the poem: woman and earth, woman and sea, plants, time, geometrical imagery, night/day confusion. Such style links up with content: it is a structure that perpetually repeats, without definitive endpoint.

A completely cohesive style would similarly contradict the "undefinable" nature of love. Guillevic's unpredictable use of quanta fits with the content. Each quantum is a brief packet of sense, usually just one sentence expressing an idea. Sometimes, there is nominal and minimal syntax which strips the meaning down to its fundamentals. There is also the use of connectives--"Donc, alors, pourtant"--which do not refer to the previous quantum, conveying thus an eruption of thought from surrounding silence. To the use of unconnected quanta can be added references to the poetic process: "Dire" (14), "De ces douceurs" (15), "manière" (22) suggest an attempt, not wholly successful, to speak of something which belongs to another dimension.

The combination of order and disorder affects the structure of quanta.

The division of the words into line groups obeys a logic. Thus, in quantum 18, line-groups put into relation miniature and vast, in quantum 44 human and mineral. In quantum 4, the frequent use of pauses can be said to have a rarefying effect congruent with the meaning "lighter than air".

Sometimes a quantum will have an equivalent stress-pattern, for instance quantum 7, which with its 6/6/6 equivalence and grammatical repetition of "de/des" harmoniously combines the earth and sea themes. In quantum 8, however, the grammatical splitting of the first two lines creates a stress pattern 3/5, while the following line-group has rhyme and syllabic equivalence 5/5 to correspond to the waves movements.

In some quanta, extra structure is used to convey movement. In quantum 12, the repetition of [R] and [t] suggests the rhythm. The expansive syntax of quantum 14, describing the volcano, is echoed by quantum 16, in which the eruption of the origin is conveyed by syntax, the isolation of "explosion" and the repetitive stress pattern 2+2/2+2//4/4//4. In quantum 29, the notion of rebeginnings is formally echoed by an expansive sentence moving from active to passive to active again, with as its vehicle the quasi-regularity 6/4//4/4//4/4. Finally, in quantum 48, the repetition of "reste" and "avec" formally correspond to the force of the movements towards and from the human.

### *Conclusion*

In previous explications of Guillevic's poems, I have placed emphasis on the negative, corrosive effects of his writing. "Les charniers" was a powerful *poème de circonstance* which used irony to shock the reader. "Les Trusts" was a successful piece of polemic, but limited by its emphasis on confrontation. And "Chemin", with its open form, demonstrated the breakdown of the grand narrative of the proletariat. "Magnificat" can be seen in a more positive

light. Throughout the poem, paradoxical formulations and disruption of expectations convey euphoria rather than melancholy. In love, Guillevic is able to enter and enjoy disorder, without fear.



## CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I will complete my survey of Guillevic's work, then broaden the perspective of this thesis by comparing and contrasting the author with his contemporaries. Three main themes are found in his most recent work that bring him close to other poets: poetry as renewed contact with the world, poetry reinventing the sacred, and poetry as movement. I will end the thesis by summarising the itinerary of Guillevic.

### 1) *Art poétique* and *Le Chant*

I begin this Conclusion by referring briefly to the two poetic works by Guillevic that appeared during the writing of this thesis: *Art poétique*, published in November 1989, and *Le Chant*, published in October 1990. Both long poems have poetry as their subject and sum up the development of Guillevic's work to this date.

The *art poétique* is found frequently in Guillevic's work. There are poems entitled "Art poétique" in *Terraqué*, *Exécutoire* and *Gagner*, while self-conscious references to poetry are found in, for example, *Inclus*. These *arts poétiques* show the development of the writer's world-view.

In *Terraqué*, poetry is affected by Guillevic's overall melancholy. The description of language points to a difficult relationship with society. It is seen as a difficult, objective thing to be struggled with (T, 138). On the positive side, the successful use of language overcomes chaos, enabling the poet to "prendre pied" (T, 140).

In the second period, Guillevic's adherence to the Communist solution causes a decisive decentring of the poet.

In the final poem of *Gagner*, Guillevic strips his individuality of all significance (G, 271). The individual voice gives way to the self-expression of a historical movement (G, 272).

The role of poetry and the poet is redefined in *Inclus*. Poetry no longer searches for justification by political commitment, but rather is a justification of life, offering the occasion for the sacred to manifest itself. The poet lives outside the constraints of authority: Guillevic emphasises the importance of deconditioning and describes the sacrificial space as ephemeral, to be continually rediscovered. At the same time, Guillevic does not emphasise individuality: the poet is "torn open" to become the active occasion for unity between man and the non-human.

There is therefore a movement, in Guillevic's *arts poétiques*, from poetry as response to a hostile environment, to poetry committed to communism, to poetry as a justification of life. The quasi-religious quality attributed to poetry in *Inclus* is deepened by *Art poétique* and *Le Chant*. Poetry is celebrated as salvation, offering a better life and renewed contact with the world. This appears to be possible because poetry is a "spirit" found throughout the network of being. At the same time, poetry is no unchanging order in the world: it is in a continual process of becoming.

Poetry is celebrated as offering the more real, the more intense. To borrow Hölderlin's phrase, Guillevic lives poetically on the earth. *Art poétique* begins:

Si je n'écris pas ce matin,  
Je n'en saurai pas davantage,

Je ne saurai rien  
De ce que je peux être. (*AP*, 9)

To write is to plunge into the adventure of life and fulfil one's potential. "Le chant" is the means to improving life:

Le chant est là.  
Tout en allant son chemin,  
Il reste là.

Il dit que notre vie  
Pourrait être  
Plus et mieux la vie. (*Ch*, 58)

Because poetry offers a better life, it appears as a saviour amidst an unreal and mediocre world:

Le chant  
Insinue toujours

Qu'il est là  
Pour le salut de ceux  
Auxquels il se donne. (*Ch*, 22)

Poetry is therefore given a religious role: it offers the justification of life and saves people in the process. This is taken further by Guillevic in *Le Chant*: if "le chant" is the "holy spirit", it is diffused, in pantheistic fashion, throughout the material world. Just as, in *Du Domaine*, Guillevic gave voice to different non-human inhabitants of the domain, confirming the decentring of *je*, so "le chant" is attributed to things and animals. In Part III of *Le Chant*, Guillevic refers to the song of, for example, the humus (*Ch*, 102), ripening crops (*Ch*, 109), and mountains (*Ch*, 112). Everything appears capable of living poetically. Guillevic describes echoes between his favourite poetry and the forest where he walks:

L'autre jour, chez moi,  
Georg Trakl  
Me chantait la forêt.

Aujourd'hui, chez elle,  
La forêt  
Me chante Georg Trakl. (*Ch*, 93)

Poetry therefore leads to communication between human and non-human. Because of this, at the end of *Art poétique*, Guillevic sums up the humiliation of man described in Chapter 3.7:

Etre  
Où et quoi?

N'importe où,  
Mais pas rien qu'en soi.

Etre dans le monde.  
Fragment, élément du monde.

Supérieur à rien,  
Pas à quiconque, pas à la pluie qui tombe,

Se sentir égal  
Et pareil au pissenlit, à la lumière,

Inférieur à rien,  
Ni au baobab, ni à l'horizon,

Vivre avec tout  
Ce qui est en dehors et en dedans,

Tout ce qui est au monde,  
Dans le monde.

Fêtu de paille, non!  
Cathédrale, non!

Un souffle  
Qui essaie de durer. (AP, 177-178)

Here man gives up the pretence of being the thinking subject separate from and superior to the material world. He takes his place as one part of a network of being. At the same time, this notion of unity with the material world does not lead to belief in the holy spirit. By violently rejecting the cathedral, Guillevic emphasises the immanent nature of the sacred in his poetry.

In *Art poétique* and *Le Chant*, Guillevic describes renewed contact between man and the world. But neither the material world, nor poetry, is static: "le chant" is not the Word regulating the earth. Instead, world and poetry are in

movement. If poetry brings raw and fresh contact with the world, this to be continually recreated.

Guillevic recuperates the dream of utopia to describe the adventure of poetry (AP, 46). But there is no definite space where this utopian impulse finds an end-point. A "total poem", summarising the relationship of the poet with the world is hypothesised (AP, 165), but the poet is aware of the impossibility of such a hope becoming real:

Tu sais  
Qu'il n'y a pas,

Qu'il n'y aura jamais,  
Au plein de tes jours,

L'arrivée,

La vraie,  
La définitive--

Et pourtant  
Tu fais comme si. (AP, 163)

"Le chant" is one continual struggle upwards:

Toujours de la verticalité  
Dans le chant

Même quand il croit  
Dire la fatigue. (Ch, 29)

Since "le chant" is at one with the process of becoming, it combines opposites:

Dans le soleil  
Le chant  
Incorpore de la nuit. (Ch, 81)

By incorporating night in the sun, "le chant" is alive to the alternations of night and day that make up time. Rather than privileging one part of being over another, it accepts the necessity of movement between opposites.

The themes of contact with the world and of movement explain the importance given to silence by Guillevic in these works. In the final quantum of *Le Chant*, he writes:

La feuille blanche  
Ne réussit le chant

Que par le silence  
Qu'on lui impose. (*Ch*, 166)

At first, this seems strange. Does the poem not usually come about through the "imposition" of words on the blank page? Instead, Guillevic is insisting, in my view, on the importance of silence in the creation of the poem. Guillevic is valorising silence because, silence means being attentive to "le chant" found throughout the poet's landscape, and because the use of silence emphasises the *emergence* of the voice; and thus the movement of creation.

## 2) Guillevic and Themes in Contemporary Poetry

### a) The Poetry of Things

Alongside Surrealism's liberation of *le rêve*, with its extravagant imagery and cultivation of difficulty, and alongside the Communist description of human struggle, there is in twentieth-century France the poetry concerned with the presence of things in the world. Guillevic's work has affinities with that of Jean Follain and Francis Ponge, who accord great significance to everyday objects. In the work of Follain, things are the occasion for thoughts on the passage of time. In Ponge's poetry, things are the occasion for questions about the relationship between man, world and language.

In Follain's poetry, objects and details from human life give rise to thoughts about the passage of time and mortality. An example of this is "Parler seul":

Il arrive que pour soi  
 l'on prononce quelques mots  
 seul sur cette étrange terre  
 alors la fleurette blanche  
 le caillou semblable à tous ceux du passé  
 la brindille de chaume  
 se trouvent réunis  
 au pied de la barrière  
 que l'on ouvre avec lenteur  
 pour rentrer dans la maison d'argile  
 tandis que chaises, table, armoire  
 s'embrasent d'un soleil de gloire. (1)

Here, salvation is expressed in terms of things. The utterance of words, which can be read as a reference to poetry, defeats the passage of time and brings back an idyllic past invested in humble objects. This refound unity with things renews the world: there is homecoming, to the "maison d'argile", and a return of magic to the world of things, bathed in "un soleil de gloire".

Time is a central obsession in Follain's work. On the positive side, his poems attempt to renew contact with things and wrest them, and him, from the destructive passage of time. On the negative side, Follain has an impossible desire to resist mortality and grab hold of a disappearing childhood. For this reason, he portrays the child as innocent, unsullied by the adult world. In "L'étendue", alongside the dreary industrial landscape created by the parents is the child's world of pure abstraction:

(...) un écolier étudie  
 algèbre et géométrie  
 dans une pièce neutre  
 et toute blanche (2)

For Guillevic, as for Follain, things are the occasion for joy and questions on existence. There can also be found in Guillevic's work Follain's melancholy view of time--for instance in "Le Temps" in *Terraqué*--and of the adult world--for instance in "Source" in *Creusement*--but these vary in



importance in Guillevic's work, unlike in Follain's. The style and preoccupations of Follain remain constant: the juxtaposition of objects and details and movement from the miniature to the vast found in "Parler seul" can be found in the poet's later work. In Guillevic's work there is the future-oriented structure, regular verse and the *poème-chemin*, demonstrating a more varied itinerary.

Another contemporary poet of things is Francis Ponge. Ponge ruminates on many of the same things as Guillevic, but his view of man and poetry's relationship to the world is different.

Ponge's world-view is dominated by the idea of the "absurd". Alienation is felt by the poet not primarily in the experience of love or politics or religion, but in that of language. Ponge attributes the moral squalor of society to an unredeemed degradation of language and vice versa, since, for him, man is language. Alongside this, things present a threat as reminders of contingency, bringing man face to face with the incomprehensibility of existence.

For Ponge, the individual can only apprehend himself at all by considering things other than himself: the realisation of the individual is achieved through the realisation of an object in language. The objects that are the subject-matter of *Le Parti pris des choses* are a provisional focus for the individual: the poems express relations between man, world and the poem itself.

Ponge gets these things into focus by concentrating on the tensions he identifies between phenomena. In his poetic studies of objects, Ponge emphasises tensions between objects, between meanings, and throws into relief the

process of writing itself. In "Bords de mer", Ponge concentrates on the shore rather than on the sea, for "l'homme (...) se précipite aux bords ou à l'intersection des grandes choses pour les définir" (3). The sea is the producer of "mille homonymes seigneurs", and is "ce livre" which "au fond n'a été lu" (4): the way it muddies meaning implies the need for clear expression by the writer.

If the sea is an example for Ponge of absurdity in the world and in language, the pebble, in "Le Galet", is championed. The pebble is surrounded by a formless expanse, not simply by the sea but by amorphous rock (5). It is singled out for praise because it is the product of the interaction of land and sea. Despite the effects of erosion, the pebble retains its form, offering order in the midst of the absurd. For Ponge the pebble offers not simply possession of the world, but also the bringing into focus of man and language:

Si maintenant je veux avec plus d'attention examiner l'un des types particuliers de la pierre, la perfection de sa forme, le fait que je peux le savoir et le retourner dans ma main, me font choisir le galet.

Aussi bien, le galet est-il exactement la pierre à l'époque où commence pour elle l'âge de la personne, de l'individu, c'est-à-dire de la parole. (6)

If the pebble, product of interactions, inspires victory over "l'absurde de l'expression", Ponge responds to the challenge by describing a series of tensions in his presentation of the object. Ponge juxtaposes earth and water, the violence of erosion and the immobility of stone, the vastness of the expanse and the tininess of a grain of sand, the ages taken for the production of the pebble and the moment in which man throws it into the sea. Finally, there is, as is frequently found in Ponge's poems, a tension

of register, between technical language and dramatic description of erosion. Ponge, too, is creating differences in a poem that aspires to the perfection of the pebble.

There are certainly resemblances between Ponge and Guillevic. As in "Bords de mer", in *Carnac*, both sea and man search for intersections where the amorphous mass of the ocean can be composed as an orderly world. Guillevic joins Ponge in comparing the sea to muddiness of language: it sucks in all forms of description and brings about the defeat of the poet's words.

But Ponge places more emphasis on *difference* than Guillevic. For the latter, water is not simply a formless expanse: it is the "blood" of the earth and, in the form of the fountain and the ocean, is connected to the "origin". Things are not simply to be brought into focus by the poet: they are involved in the project of wresting the sacred from the profane.

This is demonstrated in Guillevic's poem, "Galet". The poem is not about the pebble's clarity of form: instead, the erosion of the pebble gives rise to the theme of guilt. On the positive side, in "Chemin", man and things are drawn together, transcending a fallen condition. Guillevic emphasises unity rather than discreteness: he eroticises man and nature, celebrating *les noces* in which the world is redeemed. Unlike Ponge, Guillevic refers directly to humanity: people are described as in complicity with things, for instance, in his Stalinist phase and his love poetry.

b) Poetry after God: the Reinvention of the Sacred

Guillevic is one of the poets who have attempted to reinvent the sacred in the wake of the "death of God": retaining the desire for transcendence but rejecting the personal God and organised religion.

To begin this comparison, I will briefly refer to the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. In his thoughts on religion there is the denunciation of God that Guillevic and many of his contemporaries share, but also a series of tensions that are played out in their work.

Nietzsche most notably inaugurates the era after God with his statement that "God is dead" (7). By making such a statement, he is both telling us how things *are* and how things *should* be. It is the way things are because the rise of science has encouraged a sceptical attitude towards the scriptures; because social hypocrisy makes a nonsense of Christian ethics; and because of the loss of social authority by the Church. It is the way things should be because, for Nietzsche, the belief in God results in an impoverishment of people's lives. The compensatory belief in heaven reduces the value and dignity of physical existence, Christianity preaching a denigration of the life of the senses. Christianity is also attacked as scripture and dogma. As Nietzsche writes in *The Anti-Christ*: "the word *killeth*, all that fixes *killeth*" (8).

After God, according to Nietzsche, there is an affirmation of life and becoming. The earth will yield up its treasures to the superman, who finds his authenticity *outside* the constraints of social being.

But despite Nietzsche's denunciation of God, the sacred is not so easily banished. He describes the "death of God" as "the terrible news", a source of "unbearable loneliness" (9). The world after God is not perfect or innocent: there remains the desire to transcend an unsatisfactory condition. Nietzsche's superman has much in common with Mircea Eliade's description of religious man: "L'homme religieux désire profondément être, participer à la réalité, se saturer de puissance" (10).

The sacred returns in Nietzsche's work in the transcendent quality given to "life"; in the ascetic virtues of the superman; and especially in his views on art. Nietzsche writes in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "Only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the world and the existence of man eternally justified" (11). With the word "eternal", in the absoluteness of the claim, and in the notion of "justification", art is accorded a quasi-religious quality.

Tensions can therefore be identified in Nietzsche's thinking on religion. There is the rejection of God, but also the desire for transcendence. There is conflict between the immobility of doctrine and the desire for movement. And there is a problem of socialisation, with the individual's authenticity threatened by social contact.

It is firstly worthwhile to contrast Guillevic with a poet who has not heard the "terrible news", Pierre Emmanuel, and a poet who tries desperately not to believe it, Victor Segalen.

Pierre Emmanuel's poetry is dominated by God. He writes, in "Sache te taire":

Dieu seul réel  
Dieu seule absence.

Que sont les mots  
Sans le silence? (12)

The central problem for Emmanuel is the silence of God in a world of absence and oppression. The poet searches for the right words, beyond any false lyricism, in order to regain contact with God. This desire for transcendence is shared by Guillevic, but Emmanuel differs from him by his belief in a personal God. If Emmanuel does eroticise God, in "L'art de mourir" (13), in the form of woman, he is more interested in reconciliation with a distant God than with the material world. This is exemplified in "Dieu parle" (14), which takes the form of an address by *je* to *Tu*.

Victor Segalen, in the course of his long journeys across the Pacific to Asia, leaves behind his Christian culture, but hopes to rediscover the divine. In *Thibet*, Segalen expresses the desire for the more real that is continued in twentieth-century poetry:

Où est le sol, où est le site, où est le lieu--le milieu,  
Où est le pays promis à l'homme?  
Le lieu de gloire et de savoir, le lieu d'aimer et de connaître  
--Où gît mon royaume Terrien? (15)

In the mountains of Tibet, Segalen searches for contact with the more real represented by the Other:

Moi seul en route vers le Divers.  
Vers toi-même, haut--vers le plus étrange et le plus inaccessible...  
Vers Elle que je n'atteindrai pas. (16)

Segalen attempts to create a poem which would reach the Other. At times, the poem seems to succeed: the poet becomes the human possessor of a "Dieu-vierge incarnée à mon désir" (17). But this effort for transcendence is deflated by "en

vain", the poet returning, at the end of *Thibet*, to the "épouvantable atonie" of human society (18).

Segalen resembles Guillevic in the way he accords poetry the function of achieving the sacred, eroticises God in the form of woman, and makes the landscape, in this case the Himalayas, the site for the sacred's manifestation.

There is, however, a significant difference of tone. Segalen expresses disappointment and frustration in *Thibet* because he hopes that the Himalayas will be the site for the appearance of the divine. Despite his interest in Nietzsche, Segalen retains the word "God" in his poetry and retains the rhetorical style--prayer, apostrophe, exotic vocabulary--traditional to religion: his reinvention of the sacred is much less radical than that of Guillevic. This explains the violence of Segalen's denunciation of society, an attitude which Guillevic, despite political disappointments, cannot adopt, even in his latest works.

Guillevic has closer affinities with poets, for example André Frénaud and René Char, who recognise a debt to religion but transform it radically in favour of a new idea of transcendence: in Frénaud's case humanism, in Char's case poetry as "la vraie vie". Both poets are in favour of movement, rejecting certainty.

Frénaud expresses a desire for transcendence which is strictly humanist:

Devenir un homme,  
la seule magie,  
est art douloureux. (19)

Writing during the years of the Occupation, Frénaud, in "Les Rois mages" and "Plainte du roi mage", uses the Nativity story and the Grail myth to convey the struggle for a more

humane world. In order to convey the uncertainty of that period, Frénaud rewrites the Nativity story so that the star of Bethlehem disappears and the Child remains unreached. In turn, the hope that keeps the King on his itinerary is stripped of the divine:

(...) Est-ce un dieu qui m'attire  
 père cruel ou le fils de mon cœur lâche?  
 Quel ange me vainc encore où je saurais  
 confondre ma plus haute stature?  
 C'est l'écho de mon cri dans le futur qui m'appelle.  
 (20)

Frénaud is close to Guillevic because of his reinvention of the sacred in a humanist direction and by his emphasis on *process*. The King in "Plainte du roi mage" speaks of "Ma fècondante dèperdition" (21), a paradox which conveys the oscillation between victory and defeat which is played out in Frénaud's and Guillevic's poetry. Frénaud differs from Guillevic, however, by his emphasis on man's struggle for fulfilment--the autobiographical *je* is prevalent in Frénaud's work. Guillevic places more emphasis on the non-human world, and on man's connections with it.

René Char provides another example of contemporary poets' difficult relationship with the religious tradition. Char wants to retain the desire for transcendence, while rejecting Western religion: poetry provides the solution to this problem.

In "Carte du 8 novembre", Char derides the Church as weak and insignificant:

Pionniers de la vieille église, affluence du Christ,  
 vous occupez moins de place dans la prison de notre  
 douleur que le trait d'un oiseau sur la corniche de  
 l'air (...) Le suprême écoëurement, celui à qui la mort  
 même refuse son ultime fumée, se retire, déguisé en  
 seigneur. (22)



Char retains the notion of the sacred, but it is outside institutional restraint and connected to life:

Ange, ce qui, à l'intérieur de l'homme, tient à l'écart du compromis religieux (...) Connaît le sang, ignore le céleste. (23)

For Char, it is poetry that provides, in his culture, the means of attaining the more real. Poetry takes its place alongside religions outside the mainstream:

L'instrument poétique inventé par Rimbaud est peut-être la seule réplique de l'Occident bondé, content de soi, barbare puis sans force, ayant perdu jusqu'à l'instinct de conservation et le désir de beauté, aux traditions et aux pratiques sacrées de l'Orient et des religions critiques ainsi qu'aux magies des peuples primitifs. (24)

If poetry retains the desire of Eliade's "religious man", it refuses the "compromis religieux", continually breaking down obstacles. Poetry expresses endless desire:

Le poème est l'amour réalisé du désir demeuré désir. (25)

This combination of stasis--"réalisé, demeuré"--and forward movement--"désir"--shows the inspiration of Heraclitus in Char's thought. Poetry derives its liberating power from its affirmation of the unity of opposites:

En poésie il est advenu qu'au moment de la fusion de ces contraires surgissait un impact sans origine définie dont l'action dissolvante et solitaire provoquait le glissements des terrains qui portent de manière si antiphysique le poème. (26)

Guillevic has affinities with Frénaud and Char: the journey of the "roi mage" resembles the man in "Chemin"; the unity of opposites and continual movement championed by Char is found in *Inclus* and *Le Chant*. But these themes are found in only parts of Guillevic's itinerary: for a period Guillevic believed in the eschatology of Communism and devoted his poetry accordingly to the cause.

The nearest resemblance of itinerary, in terms of reinvention of the sacred, is with Saint-John Perse. Certainly, at the level of form, there is a great contrast between the austere and simple language of Guillevic and the rhetorical outpouring found in the versets of Perse's poetry. At the level of content, Perse is primarily interested in the links between man, poetry and natural forces, but, unlike Guillevic, he does make references to "les dieux". However, there is, in the work of both poets, change from immobility to movement, from adherence to convention to revolt.

During his Stalinist period Guillevic adheres to a Marxist version of the Judeo-Christian narrative of history. He adheres to a structure whose authoritarianism and dogma bear striking resemblance to organised religion. This affects Guillevic's role as poet: he employs his time in the defence and illustration of the Party line. His poems repeat the Party-line and reproduce the conventions demanded by "socialist realism". Commitment to the millenarian dream means abandonment of the "modernism" propounded by Rimbaud and subordination to the hierarchy typical of modern politics.

Saint-John Perse is no Communist, but in his early poems there is a similar attachment to convention and repetition. In his early poems, Perse preserves ritual intact as gestures or words obeying fixed rules requiring repetition (27). In "Récitation à l'éloge d'une reine" (28), for example, the ritual praise of the Queen succeeds. Through repeated words, the young find access to treasures of freshness and repose. In such poems, the rite is presented

by Perse as an instrument working to preserve the established order, both social and cosmic. By conferring on existence the character of regularity, it places the world and community in a state of timelessness and permanence.

Returning to Nietzsche, both Guillevic and Perse have abandoned the Christian God, but have preferred immobility to the becoming the philosopher championed. In the work of Nietzsche, the death of God leads to men leaving dry land for the danger and excitement of the sea. In *The Gay Science*, he writes:

We philosophers and "free spirits" in fact feel at the news that the "old God is dead" as if illumined by a new dawn; our heart overflows with gratitude, astonishment, presentiment, expectation—at last the horizon seems to us again free, even if it is not bright, at last our ships can put out again, no matter what (...) the danger, every daring adventure of knowledge is again permitted, the sea, *our* sea again lies there open before us, perhaps there has never yet been such an "open sea". (29)

In the work of Guillevic and Perse, the sea is the occasion for a further reinvention of the sacred. The sacred breaks away from its moorings and begins to *move*.

In *Carnac*, written in the wake of the unmasking of Stalin, Guillevic's return to his home region does not give rise to a meditation exclusively on the menhirs. To speak of the standing stones would emphasise notions of permanence and stability. Guillevic is principally interested in the ocean. Contemplating the unfurling of the waves, the poet describes a continual struggle to found a world amidst chaos. In *Carnac*, there is a desire for unity, but this unity is continually made provisional by the sea.

In the early works of Perse, rite as repetition was linked to the earth: the poet of "Ecrit sur la porte" (30)

describes a perfectly autarkic universe, determined by an immutable law, and protected from becoming and movement--ideas symbolised by the luminous expanse of the sea.

In "Eloges" (31), however, the arrival of maturity and the assertion of autonomy lead to seduction by the promise of exploration of the sea. There is an openness to space, reconciliation with the sea. Security gives way to a taste for adventure.

In their contact with the sea, both poets accept, with differing degrees of enthusiasm, the movement of the cosmos. Becoming, in turn, affects their reinvention of the sacred.

*Inclus* demonstrates the changed social relationships of the poet after Stalinism: no longer the servant of the vanguard, he deconditions himself, stripping himself of encumbering ideas. The sacred also begins to move: the centre where the sacred manifests itself is to be continually reconstructed. Temporally, the Marxist eschatology gives way to the privileged instant of revelation. Stylistically, this change is expressed in the use of open form--to convey process--and brief verses to convey the instant. After adherence to the "Church" of Stalinism, Guillevic is adopting the stance of the mystic: solitary practice, deconditioning, and continual itinerary.

In his later work, *Perse*, once he has renounced the stability of the earth for the open sea, gives the rite a negative value. If the rite obstinately resists movement, it is identified with tradition. The poem "Berceuse" (32), for example, shows ritual becoming so powerful that it suffocates the renewal promised by the arrival of Spring.

To survive honourably in Perse's work, the rite is therefore forced to be reconciled with the sea, with life and movement. Perse prioritises the life-giving nature of the rite over its repetitive nature. Repetition gives way to alternation: the rite is described as assisting the passage between divisions of time: from night to day, from labour to love, from death to expansion. These alternations inscribe themselves in a vision of history that is neither messianic, nor one of eternal recurrence, but of perpetual movement.

The rites enacted in "Amers" (33) and "Vents" (34) attempt to place man in the flux of becoming, to make him fulfil himself by overthrowing his limitations.

With this absolute confidence in the principle of movement, the rite carries within it the principle of its own destruction. The rite demands that it be ephemeral. In "Amers", the ceremony ends with the participants marching out of the ritual arena, and the poem itself, instead of being conserved by the city as a sacred text to recite periodically to attract or appease the sea, is returned to the sea that gave rise to it. There will be other celebrations, man will again be united with the sea's play of energies, but this will be by other rites, other texts.

A final comparison can be made with the work of Kenneth White. White has affinities with Guillevic through his reinvention of the sacred in the direction of contact with the earth, mysticism emptied of the divine, and marginal cultures, including Breton culture. Comparison with White also shows up the limits of Guillevic's reinvention of the sacred.

As for Guillevic and Perse, the sea plays a central role in Kenneth White's reinvention of the sacred. In "Walking the Coast" (35), the sea is a play of energies creating and destroying forms; the limit of the earth and thus the threshold of the non-human; and the place where the flotsam and jetsam of other cultures arrives, breaking up cultural autarky. The sea represents chaos, cosmos and cosmopolitanism.

In his essays and poems, White draws sustenance from a religious tradition that combines the naturalist and the anarchist.

He describes a "Hyperborean culture" linking Far West and Far East: druidism, Celtic Christianity, shamanism and Zen Buddhism are praised for their infusion of the sacred into the natural world.

White praises the iconoclasm of early Christians like Pelagius and Scotus Erigena, who stood out against orthodoxy. In sketching a "new mental geography", White distinguishes between the mind of the archipelago, represented by the West of Scotland, and the mind of the institution. He writes:

A l'ouest, les communautés de moines sont éparpillées sur tout le territoire, notamment sur les îles, sans évêché central, sans hiérarchie. L'évêque n'a aucun pouvoir, seul compte, dans son espace, divino-naturel, le moine individuel. (36)

At the same time, however, White's refusal of all that is fixed leads to a distinction between religion and poetry:

La poésie commence par un refus radical du monde. En cela elle ressemble à la religion qui a <<son royaume de l'esprit>> et son <<royaume qui n'est pas de ce monde>>. Les moines et les poètes ont à l'origine quelque chose en commun. Mais les différences éclatent tout de suite. Alors que la religion, dans son refus du monde, invente sur-le-champ un *autre* monde, et vit dès lors une vie double et souvent hypocrite, le poète

continue de faire ses excursions et ses expérimentations sur la terre, et c'est à partir de son expérience de la terre qu'il essaiera de réaliser, en contraste avec ce qu'il éprouve comme un monde inauthentique, un monde plus riche et plus intense. (37)

Poetry attempts to find the "white world", the "void", beyond such notions as "being", "principle of non-contradiction" and "personal identity". Poetry, for White, is a form of yoga, of deconditioning through which the socio-personal is transcended. Poetry inherits the ideas of mysticism, but empties them of the divine:

Pénétrer jusqu'au blanc était l'affaire des mystiques ou, de temps en temps, d'un philosophe. Mais aujourd'hui que le ciel est vide et que les concepts hier encore si lumineux touchent à leur crépuscule, cette pénétration est affaire de poésie. Par la force des choses, la poésie, d'artistique, est devenue mystique et philosophique. Et c'est tant mieux pour la poésie, et pour la mystique, qui trouve à se dire autrement que par les images grossières de la religion, et pour la philosophie, qui ne reste plus confinée dans ses jargons. (39)

In order to fulfil the aims set out in his essays, Kenneth White's *art poétique* emphasises concreteness, brevity and openness. Inspired by Celtic and Japanese poetry, White aims for "une poésie qui allie sentence gnomique et description naturaliste, les élevant toutes les deux à un niveau supérieur" (39). White also aims for an "open form", made up of different sections, not cohesively linked but forming a coherent string.

There are affinities between White and Guillevic: the brief natural descriptions from which abstract statements can be inferred, the use of open form composed of discrete sections. And Kenneth White's image of the poet journeying over the earth, continually renewing contact with it, is apt in describing the poet during the third period of Guillevic's work.

But there are important differences between White and Guillevic, and these differences can be traced back to their attitude towards the sea. Firstly, there is the sea encouraging cosmopolitanism: Guillevic has read and travelled, but his poetry is not as allusive and explicitly erudite as White's. Secondly, there is the sea as representative of chaos: White wants to heed the call of Nietzsche to set out on the open sea, to break down certainties, for "all that fixes *killeth*". The sea inspires poetry in its attempt at "white penetration". Similarly, White praises the *haiku* not simply for its clear perception of nature, but because it leads ultimately to the "void".

It would be wrong to say that Guillevic does not have affinities with White's idea of poetry as yoga. In the later works, there is greater emphasis on deconditioning: the references to the white room wiped clean of the city in *Ville*; the marginal figures of child and savage celebrated in "Source" and "Vitrail".

But Guillevic places more emphasis than White on stability. The sea in *Carnac* may herald the entry of movement and uncertainty in Guillevic's universe, but the mood is not euphoric: the sea can inspire terror. In one quantum of *Carnac*, the tree overlooking the sea shivers with fear at what it sees:

Il arrive qu'un pin  
Du haut de la falaise  
Te regarde et frissonne  
Tant que dure le jour. (C, 178)

The tree is valorised by Guillevic because it offers rootedness in the earth:

Je ne veux plus  
Etre nuage.



Je veux être arbre  
 Et m'en tenir  
 A mon terrain. (R, 14)

White is not hostile to the tree, but his mindscape privileges the wave and the cloud as representing movement and the escape from fixed identity. Guillevic, denouncing God and rebelling against social restraints, does not follow White to his extremes. There is more inertia in Guillevic's world-view, which can explain the retention of religious vocabulary in his poetry, for example, *vitrail* and *magnificat*.

### 3) *The Itinerary of Guillevic*

On the themes of the presence of things and the reinvention of the sacred, Guillevic has affinities with several of his poetic contemporaries. But Guillevic draws close to these poets only during *parts* of his trajectory, especially from the third period onwards. The only similarity of itinerary was found in Perse's reinvention of the sacred in favour of movement—but this left out the question of Communism and the problem of man's relationship to nature explored in Guillevic's poetry. It remains to summarise briefly Guillevic's itinerary.

Guillevic's search for what Rimbaud calls "la vraie vie" leads to variations in his attitude towards the role of the individual, the role of poetry in renewing the world, and the relationship between the human and the non-human.

The first period of Guillevic's poetry is deeply marked by the absence of "la vraie vie". The individual is in a

mainly hostile relationship with family and society, while humanity and nature are antagonists rather than partners.

In the second period, "la vraie vie" is promised by the Communist movement. The individual adheres to the collective, hoping to find salvation in commitment. Poetry becomes "useful": it is not the avant-garde uncovering new sensations and ways of seeing, but rather defends and illustrates the ideas of the political avant-garde. Adherence also brings about a change in man's relationship with nature: man is the leading edge of matter, and as such imposes his will on the non-human.

In the third period of Guillevic's poetry, the unmasking of Stalinism leads to a loss of enthusiasm for, then loss of faith in, Communist utopia. Guillevic insists on the importance of autonomy: critical awareness and the challenging of social conventions. Poetry no longer takes second place to the political movement, but becomes a justification of life itself, a reinvented form of the sacred that offers "la vraie vie". If the individual is freed from social commands, he is nevertheless implicated in the vast network of matter. Man and nature complement each other in the third period, this perspective deepening with the decentring and "humiliation" of man. With the failure of the Communist narrative of history, there is an irruption of endless movement and instability into Guillevic's universe.

At the level of form, Guillevic's poetry both develops, showing significant changes in his world-view, and has features which remain constant.

The overall melancholy of Guillevic's world-view affects the form of the poems in the first period. Dominant are

structures of negation, pessimistically conveying the victory of the negative, and open structures that convey uncertainty. The poet's move towards political commitment causes the emergence of positive endings in his work.

With the shift to political commitment in the second period, the future-oriented structure becomes dominant. The poet speaks in the name of the collective *nous* in opposition to the Capitalist enemy. The poetry of this period has the style of strife: language of invective, command and persuasion show its adherence to political struggle.

In the wake of the unmasking of Stalinism, the long poem that emerges in Guillevic's work does not tell the story of struggle for inevitable victory, but conveys a project of unity marked by uncertainty, contradiction and discontinuity. The collective voice of *nous* remains, but as a declining orientation among others. Time does not unfold confidently into the future, but is dispersed: the instant takes on great importance. The quanta of the long poems are sometimes linked by contradiction, while within them, modal verbs and adverbs convey uncertainty.

As Guillevic's negative view of the worth of human endeavour deepens in his latest work, this causes further developments in form. The structure of negation, absent since the first period, returns to convey pessimism. To convey the abandonment of human authority, the structure of poems like *Du Domaine* is more diffuse, with uncertainty created by drastic reduction of the quanta. The *je* becomes one voice among many in an animised network of being.

If these are the main developments in the form of Guillevic's poetry, there are features which remain

throughout. The early poems introduce the reader to an austere style, lacking in metaphor and adjective, with direct, everyday language. This creates tensions at different stages of his work. In his contributions to *Poésie nationale*, the combination of neo-classical verse and colloquial and discursive language shows an attempt to unite national and proletarian cultures. In later poems, such as *Inclus*, everyday language is used to deflate rhetorical style and thus the idiom of established religion.

If, with the exception of some of his sonnets, Guillevic distances himself from traditional poetic form, he is nevertheless alive to the possibilities offered by syntax and prosody to convey extra meaning. In the quanta of his poems, syntax and stress-patterns are used to create an immediate, direct effect. to convey movement, variation and contradiction. There is also a limited use of phonetic patterning. There are different formal configurations to help explain different directions of thought: syntax and prosody are part of a process.

Guillevic's search for "la vraie vie" brings us into contact with major problems of the twentieth century: the uneasy relationship between Communism and freedom; the crisis of man's relationship to nature. Such problems erupt in Guillevic's poetry, but they are not solved. Referring to previous critical studies, it is certainly true that Guillevic finds Pierre Daix's "monde réel" a Stalinist illusion, but it does not follow that he attains the "sérénité" spoken of by Pierrot and Tortel. Guillevic's search for "la vraie vie" leaves him anxious. Poetry, for instance in *Inclus*, and love, for instance in "Magnificat",

offer justifications of life—but Guillevic is acutely aware that this is not all of life. Guillevic is disappointed with politics, dissatisfied by urban civilisation, and disturbed by the threat, described in "Bretagne", of a monoculture.

Guillevic, as man and poet, is deeply implicated in history, and yet appears very out of place in the twentieth century. Despite living most of his life in the city, Guillevic adheres to the non-urban landscape. Urban life is virtually absent from his poetry, except as a problem to be confronted, while even in his Stalinist phase, at the height of his adherence to "modernity", Guillevic describes dynamic *country* scenes. Guillevic remains attached to the very much pre-modern Brittany of his childhood. The presence of the natural elements and the notion of the sacred power of poetry contribute to make Guillevic a fascinating meeting-place for the contemporary and the archaic.

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